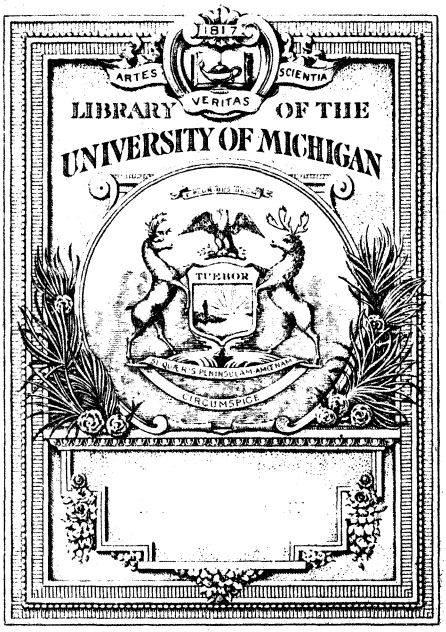
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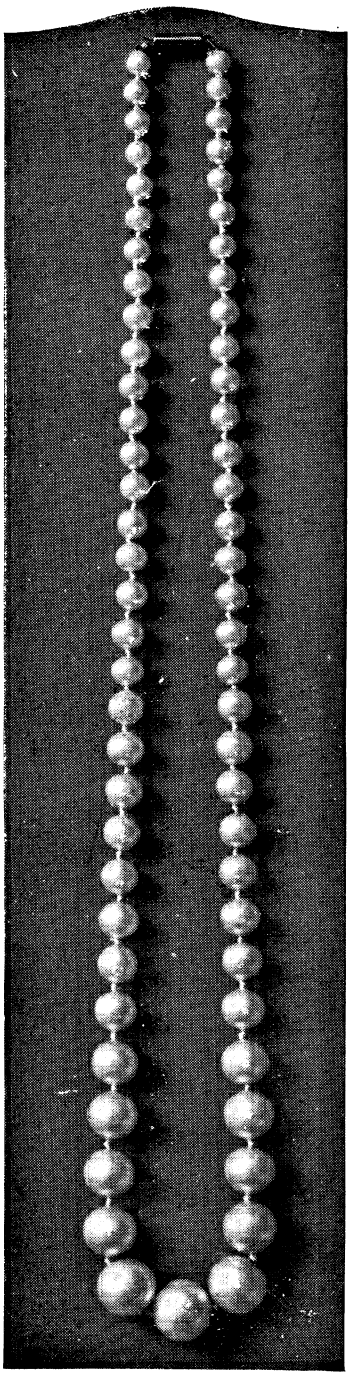


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"A situation had arisen which would call for all the 'savoir faire' she possessed."

THE WOMAN WITH "SAVOIR FAIRE"

By LAURENCE MEYNELL

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

AT the end of this story (as you will see if you persevere so far) I asked Stevens a question. "What" (I asked of him) "is the deepest and the darkest, the most bruised and the most unbreakable, the most generous, incomparably the most foolish and yet infinitely the finest thing in this wide world?" And he gave me the right answer. I know it was right because I saw the whole thing.

It was my first visit to Leastgate; and, in a part of the country where signposts seemed to be restricted to about one per parish, I had already spent twenty minutes up and down profitless lanes before I struck what was undoubtedly the main road from the village to Leastgate Park.

I had motored down from London, and what with the dust and the volume of August traffic and the scarcity of signposts, I had not made any too rapid a journey, so that I was in no mood for dawdling over the last mile or so; I trod on the accelerator and sent the car along at a smart pace. But of course there are limits to everything, especially to one's good resolutions; mine broke down at once before a combination of three things; a hot August afternoon,

a dusty road, and a smartly dressed girl in tweeds carrying a bulky suit-case. My foot came off the accelerator and on to the brake.

"May I be of service in offering you a lift?" I asked; and even as I raised my hat and looked into those pleasantly surprised eyes I could see that my surmises about the back had been right. The face was not such as is indigenous to the rural countryside; it had vivacity, colour and two eyes that made you, having raised your hat, forget to put it on again; there was a slight suggestion of scent.

"Coty's Chypre," I thought to myself a trifle wonderingly. "Now, what's Coty's Chypre doing struggling with a hefty suit-case between a nowhere and a nowhere when obviously she ought to be in Town having tea at Gunter's?" So I made my offer of a lift and it was gladly accepted.

"Rather," she cried with alacrity. "How very nice of you. I was just beginning to experience all the pains of Purgatory,—heat, loneliness, intense discomfort, and doubt as to whether I should ultimately reach my goal."

"Your goal being——?" I suggested as she settled herself among the cushions and I slammed the door to.

She told me at once; at least she appeared to, but after she had been talking with the greatest animation for two minutes she stopped, and I discovered that all I knew was, that owing to a combination of circumstances (unspecified), she had to take train to Leastgate and walk the matter of a mile or more along the high road.

"And this," she added, stretching two dainty feet in front of her and accepting one of my cigarettes, "seems to me to be the most comfortable way of doing it."

I re-started the car—and forgot all about the accelerator.

"As a matter of fact," she went on in a sudden burst of confidence, "I am going to Leastgate Park. You don't happen to know it, I suppose?"

"Never been there in my life," I was able to assure her.

"Nor have I," she said. "I don't even know the people who live there; I am going as a 'supplied guest.'"

I had heard of many strange things bearing even stranger names in this queer post-war world, but never of a "supplied guest" before; so after puzzling a little over it I shook my head. "Sorry," I said, "but we don't use 'em where I come from. What is a supplied guest, anyway?"

"A supplied guest," explained the lady with the ironically amused voice, "is a direct outcome of the war. So many people, you see, were left with manners and no money; and so very many suddenly acquired money without manners that something had to be done about it. It all fitted in so beautifully, you see, because each could offer what the other wanted most. Naturally those people who had suddenly become rich wanted to entertain, and just as naturally they wanted to do it properly; and as for those who had lost the mere external accident of money, they still retained their knowledge of how things should be done and their appetites. As the Scripture says, Man liveth not by his Oxford accent alone. So some bright person conceived the idea of marketing 'Savoir Faire'; in fact, we are actually known as 'Savoir Faire Limited' (pretty bumptious, isn't it?), Old Bond Street, 989A, don't forget the 'A.' I say, I'm afraid this is rather boring you, isn't it? Usually wild horses wouldn't drag it out of me, but it gets pretty tiring at times, and seeing you had a Zingari tie on——"

"Please don't apologise," I begged of her, "I find it intensely interesting; but I don't quite see how it works, I'm afraid——"

"Like most great ideas," said my vivacious companion, "it works with extreme simplicity. If you were going to Leastgate Park, you would have an opportunity of studying a very good example of it. Mrs. Platt (the Platts bought up Leastgate) and her husband have no very extensive knowledge to draw upon as to the manner of running a house-party; which personally I don't think can be considered extraordinary, as I don't see how you can give up the first half of your life to tinning pork and be expected to do anything else at all. Apparently the war had a good effect on pork, I don't quite know why; and now Mr. and Mrs. Platt have given up tinning it and settled down to be county gentlefolk. And in my humble opinion they have acted very wisely. Naturally, as this is her first house-party, Mrs. Platt wants somebody at hand who can tell her just how big an idiot she is in danger of becoming. Hence me, direct from Savoir Faire Limited, at a pretty stiff fee. We thought tinned pork could run to it. I shall give everything a comprehensive overhaul when I get there; stop the Platt woman from



"'May I be of service in offering you a lift?' I asked; and even as I raised my hat and looked into those pleasantly surprised eyes I could see that my surmises about the back had been right."

coming down like a peripatetic diamond mine; see that there isn't too much fizz about (I'm afraid they'll insist on having some); talk with extreme rapidity during the meal, especially running to the fore with a diversion whenever one of the family looks like putting his foot in it; and in general be the unobserved oil in the social machine. We've grown into quite a business. I dare say you've met some of our people at work already without knowing it."

"You like it?" I was foolish enough to ask after a pause.

The lady in tweeds left the word "like" alone.

"It's amusing," she said judicially, "much more so than being a mannequin or running a tea-shop, but at times it makes you want a breath of fresh air. Once or twice I've done it in houses where I used to stay in the old days before they were sold up—it seemed almost sacrilegious somehow;—but then it seems to me that life has become entirely iconoclastic; so many of the real things have gone, one schools oneself to pretend nowadays——"

Now for a person this side of thirty with deep brown eyes and a figure straight out of Sackville Street to talk about "pretending" is hardly natural; and when, moreover, she talks about it with bitterness in her pretty voice, the fool asks further questions, and gets duly snubbed for his pains; but the wise man says no more. So I gave a little inward sigh, because I don't like things to go wrong for anyone, and once more slowing up, I said, "This looks like the Lodge; I see the gates are open; you didn't have to teach 'em that."

"But you're not coming here?" she asked.

"I'm afraid I am," I confessed. "I've been asked down to join the house-party by a friend of mine who knows the Platts. I'm sorry."

The lady in tweeds was very angry. "To say you're sorry," she exclaimed, "is grossly inadequate. You ought to have told me before; it was mean of you not to."

We had pulled up in front of the door before I could think of any answer to that.

"I'm a journalist," I said with a sort of heavy facetiousness, "a man who has to indulge in all sorts of honourable dishonesties, so you needn't worry about me. I have already forgotten all you told me." But she, apparently, had forgotten my existence, for the door had already opened and she was striding in before a bowing footman.

STEVENS came to my room whilst I was dressing. I had been out of England for two years and it was good to see his thin brown face with its humorous eyes again. Stevens is the sort of person who knows everybody and is at home everywhere; and, whilst I wrestled with a refractory Savoy tie, he sat on my bed and gave me an amusing résumé of everybody in the house.

"Poor old Platt," he said, "is negligible; he creeps about longing to take off his collar and put his feet on the mantelshelf; it's rather pitiful to see him, he was just beginning to enjoy life when his wife pulled him off and made him try to be a gentleman; he just doesn't know what to do. He sidled up to me the other day and said, 'Say, Major, what do folks *do* round here? When does anything happen, anyway?' I pointed out to him that the pump had gone wrong at the South Lodge and the gardener's child had just got measles and the parson down in the village had an invitation to a better living, all within three days; which—as I told him—was country life at its busiest. He thought I was pulling his leg. And as for Mrs. Platt—she is simply a piece of pork which he has signally failed to tin."

"There are others?" I suggested.

"Oh, Lord, yes, half a dozen of 'em; there's a girl apiece told off for you and me; a young married couple that have only just got over their honeymoon; and several others, including the *raison d'être* of it all."

"And who may she be?"

"Wrong again," Stevens grinned. "It just shows your lewd mind; 'tisn't a she, it's a he; a young fellow called Aubrey Carr. The mountainous Mrs. Platt has designs on him."

"What's he like?" I asked.

"He wears attractive shirts," was Stevens's only commentary; but then he never was much good at pulling other people to pieces.

"One gathers," I said impersonally, "that there is a Miss Platt."

"Not half," said Stevens; "she's been over at Westdale watching cricket. You wait till you see her at dinner."

IN due time I saw her at dinner; I also saw all the other people Stevens had already warned me about, and it was really quite amusing. The Fates would hardly have lived up to their reputations if they hadn't put me next to the lady lately in tweeds. She was introduced as a Miss Kent—"of 989A Old Bond Street," I added under my breath, and I must say she was a credit to Savoir Faire Limited. You were kept so busy listening to the amusing things she said that you hadn't time to notice old Platt dropping his "h's"; not that she monopolised the conversation, but she seemed to have something appropriate to say to everyone (even including me) at precisely that psychological moment when each feared that he wasn't going to come into the picture at all. There was Stevens, of course, being gravely polite to a fluffy-haired doll hardly out of her teens; there were the newly

married ones rather elaborately at their ease; there were one or two others who wore their white shirts or moved their whiter arms merely as decorative parts in the picture; and there was Mrs. Platt. I was frightened of Mrs. Platt from the moment I first saw her. I felt that if she had made up her mind to be an Empress she would somehow have succeeded; and having made up her mind to achieve the much more difficult task of becoming an English gentlewoman, she was grimly and relentlessly succeeding in that. Her small unattractive lips were never opened but after careful forethought and preparation; her small gimletty eyes seldom strayed from the vivacious and effortlessly correct Miss Kent. I seem to have forgotten something. I am faced with the task of trying to persuade you that in the intervals of tinning pork Mr. and Mrs. Platt had between them produced a miracle. There is no other word for her. Very slender, very dark, with fawn-brown eyes, very silent, very much afraid (I think) but secretly very much amused by everybody; in the simplest, oh, the most seductively simple, of plain white frocks, Jessica Platt. Well, there she was; and if you ask me how it happens that her gross material pork-tinning parents had anything at all to do with that delicate wonder, I can only shrug my shoulders and ask you, in your turn, to explain half a dozen other mysteries of nature. We can only marvel, and be grateful that Providence is not bound by logic in these matters.

There was also an empty chair at the table; it should have been occupied by Mr. Aubrey Carr—the wearer of attractive shirts—but he had telephoned to say that he was delayed, and dinner, therefore, proceeded without him.

For my part I was content to let the capable lady from Savoir Faire do all the talking, and to feast my eyes, as much as I dared, on the slender, upright, incredible thing opposite me. I began to be rather envious of young Carr and his nice shirts.

Dinner was excellent; so good, in fact, that I could not help thinking Savoir Faire must have been consulted about its composition; and, thanks to the unobtrusive efforts of Miss Kent, there were none of those devastating lacunæ in the conversation in which the imp of irrefrangible silence seems to assume human shape and to sit mockingly by each tongue-tied person in turn. Even old Platt was occasionally beguiled into leaving his dreams of pork and the tinning thereof, and induced to take a more or less intelligent interest in what was being said; and sometimes, but not frequently enough, we were treated to a ripple of infectious laughter. Jessica laughed with the inconsequentiality of a child, and as she did so her deep brown eyes would fill with mirth like sparkling wine pouring into some clear vessel. She admired the lady from Savoir Faire enormously, and I knew somehow that Miss Kent had taken a liking to her. Indeed, I think that everybody had; she was a girl of that rare type that is as popular with women as with men. Yet don't let this tale deceive you; it really isn't about Jessica Platt at all, which just shows how little we know of life.

Towards the end of dinner a diversion was occasioned by the entrance of Mr. Aubrey Carr. . . . "No, no, thank you, he didn't *want* any dinner, he had had some, but he couldn't bear to miss the port; no, absolutely nothing, thank you, just port. . . ." Whilst all this was going on between him and the over-solicitous Mrs. Platt I took casual stock of his sparse frame, his good-looking weak face, his not over-steady eyes. His lips were saying polite things with just a shade, oh, believe me, only a tinge, of condescension in them to Mrs. Platt, whilst those unconvincing eyes sought, and held, the radiant, overwhelmingly true ones of Jessica. Then I noticed a curious thing: a clutched glass trembling violently; the glass was held tightly in the white hand of Miss Kent, which in its turn was trembling too. I glanced at her face; it was whiter than her hand. "Hallo, feeling queer?" was almost out of my mouth when her eyes stopped me; it was not that sort of queerness.

I could see that a situation had arisen which would call for all the "savoir faire" she possessed. Meanwhile introductions were upon us; presently "Miss Kent, Mr. Carr." I kept my eyes on his face during that; I knew what hers was like; he was not the sort to give himself away badly, but when the formal words were done I could see the tip of his tongue moistening his suddenly dried lips, so I guessed it was worse for him than for her. Then we all settled down to enjoy port plus Mr. Carr's company and minus Miss Kent's conversation. The fount of Savoir Faire had dried up; and, rightly interpreting a kick from her dainty heel as a distress signal, I stepped into the breach with one or two well-worn war

anecdotes. When Mrs. Platt led the ladies away to the drawing-room, I was rewarded, under cover of the general business of rising, with a fervent "Thank you" for my handy conversational efforts. The port was good and I communed with mine in silence, watching the enigmatic Mr. Carr and turning over in my mind Stevens's phrase about him—"he wears attractive shirts"; it was so eminently just; young Carr was exactly the type of person whose shirts are a shade too attractive. The man who shows that it is rather a bore to be your guest is merely rude, but the man who acts as though he were conferring an honour upon you by coming is usually a bounder; and there were one or two phrases which young Carr used towards poor old Platt which made me want to get up and kick him violently. I caught Stevens's eye after the most outrageous of them and he favoured me with a wink that said a lot of things.

In due course we left the port—to young Carr's evident regret—and sought the ladies in the drawing-room. The question arose as to what we should do. Dancing was suggested, but someone (good Samaritan) said that it was too hot for dancing. Cards were thought of, but then the numbers were not right; and after that there was a dearth of suggestions. Mrs. Platt looked in angry supplication towards the fount of Savoir Faire, as who should say, "What am I paying my money for?" and Miss Kent came forward nobly with a unique suggestion. "We will tell stories," she cried.

"Stories," everybody said, "but——" Miss Kent was having no buts; and since Jessica was taken with the suggestion ("Oh, do let's," she cried, clapping delighted hands), stories it was. We sat in a semi-circle in the loggia whilst the day died reluctantly away and bit by bit we became mere white indistinctnesses in the eerie half-light.

Miss Kent told the first story; she was sitting in a chair next to me, and at first there was sufficient light for me to see her white hand gripping the arm of her chair and the knuckles showing through the tauted skin. The others stretched round in an irregular semicircle; here and there a cigarette or cigar end made a stupidly intense point in the wonderfully vague evening air; Aubrey Carr sat farthest away from me, next to Jessica. I was noticing these incidental things and so I missed the beginning of Miss Kent's story, but I remember her low, vibrant voice, and how more and more inescapably it held us all as the light left us and we sat there each seeing pictures in the dark.

". . . true story," the girl called Miss Kent was saying, "no, I don't promise that, because, after all, what is truth? It is simply the one thing that scatters illusions, that cannot co-exist with dreams, and what should any story in the world be without dreams? Mine indeed begins with dreams. Very curious dreams, too, in a young head old in many ways beyond its years. Dear, queer, foolish things used to go on inside that girl's head, the more so because she had no one to tell them to; her father and mother had died when she was still at school and she had lived afterwards with an uncompromising and uncomprehending aunt. So that she grew up in their vast country house solitary and secretive, feasting only on the magnificent fancies that ran in her childish head. She had animals which were her great friends and books which were even greater. She grew to womanhood almost unnoticeably, and almost in a day, as it were, changed from a berry-brown lissom thing tumbling with the puppies in the straw to a straight and serious young Madonna, tremendously overawed by the magnificence of her new clothes. For she was twenty and her aunt decreed that she must come to London and take her place in the world of fashion. And you must understand, what the girl herself at first only vaguely understood, that she went to London not unprovided for. She was the only child of her parents and she inherited all their wealth and possessions into which she would come when she reached that first magical height in the hills of life that we call 'twenty-one.' So she was in Town; for the first time she knew its golden hours, its lights, its magical shimmering darknesses, the whole intoxication of the wine of Life. For the first time she was aware of Men (as, you may be sure, they were aware, and doubly aware, of her); she danced with men and she got to know that faint but undeniable thrill that comes to a girl when a man takes her into his arms; she dined with men and was ready to answer all their pleasantries with a quick native wit; she went here and there with men, always unaffectedly wondering at such generosity that put theatres, dances, dinners, cars at her disposal. And all the time she was conscious of something not touched upon, something latent, that for an instant

would appear in a man's eyes, or for half an instant underlie his speech.

" But the gods do not like us for too long to skim on the exhilarating ice of life, and they see to it that the waters underneath are cold and dangerous enough. The girl reached twenty-one—ah, if all of us would only look back and try to remember the brave music that we heard then, the kingdoms unconquered at our feet, the wine at our elbow untasted. . . ."

For a moment or two Miss Kent's voice died away and we were left with the darkness and our glowing cigarette ends—and our dreams; each man and woman, I suppose, saw clearly the dead yesterdays ranged mockingly before them, the ghastly futile might-have-beens.

". . . The girl was twenty-one," that low voice went on, breaking a silence that was rapidly growing unendurable, " and there were celebrations; consisting principally of a dance, where she saw again the numerous men she had come to know during the months gone by. They brought her presents lavishly, of course, so that she was almost overwhelmed with gratitude for such kindness; they brought her delicate little caresses of their hands; they brought her their smiles, their gallantries, their flippancies; and underneath all these things some, the more optimistic, still brought her that guessed-at latent Something. One of them did even more, he brought a friend to the dance. The girl danced with all her men guests in turn; in due time she danced with the friend who had been brought by one of them. He danced well, so that during the evening they partnered one another more than once. The dance ended, as all things will, and people left; they got their cloaks or coats and climbed into their cars and were whirled sleepily away; for them it had been a jolly evening, one out of many such, and it was over . . . but for the girl they left, bright-eyed and sleepless behind them, it was vastly different. Half undressed, she sat in her small room staring with enkindled eyes into the half-light of the morning; she dared to dream and to hope those things that are youth's birthright. She felt wiser than Solomon, richer than Crœsus, for now she had knowledge of those strange fires she had seen slumbering in men's eyes, she had the wealth that comes from deliberate self-abandonment. Before she got into bed she knelt before her little gaudily painted wooden Virgin and prayed that she might not fail or falter in this queer slavery of Love that had been cast on her. For love the man she did. He was young, he was not unhandsome, he threw over life the seductive, but false, glamour of ' having a good time.' He was an ensign in one of the most exclusive regiments on the Army List; the very small and very inaccessible clubs where London's real dancing is done were open to him; a race meeting hardly seemed complete without him. And he was incurably selfish. Looking back, it is painful to think of that ludicrous selfishness showing itself in all sorts of petty childish ways; but at the time, of course, even if she had realised it, the girl would not have resented it. Her love, which was sudden and fresh and complete, was the sort which glories in self-immolation; the more that in his unthinking, selfish way he asked of her, the more grateful she was for having an opportunity to prove her love and loyal devotion, which to the unhappy observers were already clearer than the sun at noon-day.

" There were not wanting rumours, and they were so persistent that they reached even her uncaring ears, that the old adage ' fine feathers do not make fine birds ' still had some homely truth in it. She dismissed them with an angry shrug of her shoulders; in her suddenly found wisdom she said that ' the world will say anything of anyone it envies.' One man, her better friend than she then knew, went so far as to warn her openly, even dared to go so far as to use the words ' yellow streak '; she rang the bell and had him, a man old enough to be her father, dismissed by a servant; so incredibly blind is the heart when lost in love! The man she loved was good to her; when it interfered with none of his other pleasures he was always ready to take her out to races, to dinners, to dances. Her abandoned adoration he answered by a half-bantering, half-tolerant amusement, deepened sometimes by the roughness of thinly veiled passion. For every sign that he was good enough to give her, for every thoughtless caress, for each easily spoken word of endearment, she was devoutly grateful, as a hungry child might be for crumbs. She was even pleased (and unwarned!) when on more than one occasion he borrowed money from her to meet ' debts of honour ' and repaid her—with a kiss.

" Ah, my friends, it was an infatuation; and we, safely past the happy age when infatuations are possible, may look back



"'She rang the bell and had him, a man old enough to be her father, dismissed by a servant; so incredibly blind is the heart when lost in love!'"

on it with all the pitying scorn of experience, just as the horse broken to the shafts and callous of the harness may look on the plunging colt that is losing its freedom—but it makes it no sweeter for the colt.

"But an infatuation whilst it lasts is the wildest, most wonderful thing of all; emotion has little enough to do with reason; but love is worse, it is an unreasoning emotion and infatuation an unreasoning love; it is the very quintessence of fine folly. And be sure that the girl, whilst she was deceived, was happy. No dreams like the earliest ones, no illusions like those before

all illusions are mistrusted, no rapture like the first. But the gods, who are jealous of lovers because love lifts men above ordinary mortals, will not let rapture last.

" She had the first intimation of what was to come, not from him, of course, but by accident from two other men. It was at a function of some sort that she heard his name mentioned—as though that name could have been whispered in the whole of London and her instructed ears not catch it !—She saw the furtive looks and noted the sudden change of subject that took place when she joined the group. She was mildly curious. ' You were talking of Austin ? ' she asked. Manlike, they roundly



denied it. 'Oh, but I heard you,' she mischievously insisted. 'Surely I have as much right to hear about him as anyone.' Still more manlike, they forthwith looked sheepish, and one, consulting a hastily pulled-out watch, found that he must go; the other, less readily inventive, remained in the girl's clutches. And of all the persistent things in this world, an innocent young girl who wishes to extract some information about her lover is most to be avoided. The man she has set upon must confess, or fly to a desert island; flight being impossible, the man in this particular instance confessed. He did it in a typically masculine fashion, indirectly, protestingly, trying to appear a martyr to the whole cause of victimised masculinity.

"'You were speaking of Austin?'

"'No, Josephine, really not——'

"'Oh, but you were.'

"'Well, *I* wasn't; if anybody mentioned his name it was Charles' (Charles was he who had been honest enough to flee: could methods be more masculine!).

"'And you heard him?'

"'Oh, yes, I *heard* him.'

"'And he said?'

"'Why, nothing; his name was just mentioned, that was all.'

"'But if it were nothing there would be no object in hiding it from me.'

"'Hiding? Ha-ha!' (the masculine cackle). 'My dear girl, I wouldn't dream of hiding anything;—but you know what gossip can be——'

"'It was gossip?'

"'Well, rumour; I don't believe it was true.'

"'There was something, then?'

"'Mere tittle-tattle, I expect, simply a tale from his club.'

"'I should like to hear it.'

"'Oh, pouf, child, people don't repeat these things.'

"'No? But Charles repeated it to you, and how long would it have been before you repeated it to one other man, I wonder? Do you think it fair that everybody should be told but me?'

"He shrugged his shoulders.

"'Oh, if Austin were here,' she cried, angrily stamping her foot, 'he would make you repeat it or apologise; men are such cowards.'

"The man fired up at that (as he was meant to). 'Cowards,' he sneered, 'at any rate I shouldn't like it to be said that I cheated at cards at my club, and was to be blackballed in consequence; it seems to me that's worse than cowardice.'

"'Ah!' The girl looked at him with scornful eyes; it was out then at last, that was the poor lie which men in their envy were whispering to one another.

"Later, she sought out her lover, and, having been greeted by his lips, waited for a moment, half expecting to hear some angry account and protest from him. But he had nothing to say. ('He doesn't want to hurt me with the tale,' she thought.) She teased him with her knowledge. 'People say strange things about you, dear,' she said.

"He turned on her almost angrily.

"'What have you heard?' he asked. 'I should have thought you were above common gossip.'

"She repeated quite briefly what she had been told.

"'And you believe it, I suppose,' he sneered, 'like all the rest?'

"She looked at him with quite undisturbed eyes.

"'It never entered my head to think that it could be true,' she said. 'Surely you trust me enough for that, dear?'

"'Oh, well,' he half laughed, 'of course I do—I'm sorry; a thing like this makes one nervy.'

"'How will you fight them?'

"'Fight them?'

"'The people who spread such lies?'

"'How can I? It would be different if we were abroad, duels are not encouraged in England.'

"'There are the law courts.'

"'No, no, not the courts—for one thing, that's so frightfully expensive.'

"She laughed at that word expensive and gently ruffled his brown hair. Lately, since she was twenty-one, two grey-haired and very courteous old gentlemen had spent a whole afternoon explaining to her exactly how much property and money had, by some mysterious means, suddenly become her own. In their quiet impersonal undertones they had mentioned figures which seemed to her colossal—but she was glad of them now, quite unreservedly she vowed all she had to the purpose of clearing her lover's name. It was not a conscious act of sacrifice on her part at all, it seemed only natural that she should do so—the man she loved was in danger; it was a danger therefore that also threatened her, and she must meet it.

"A gleam of something like hope lit up

his eyes when she made those simple proposals.

" ' You mean it ? ' he asked.

" She nodded ; of course she meant it.

" ' You're awfully good to me,' he said, kissing her. It was the kiss of Judas.

" He became more thorough in his preparations to defend his name than she had known him in anything ; he waxed more and more indignant over his wrongs, perhaps he was the sort that easily does wax indignant ; there was a conspiracy against him ; he would sift this matter to the very bottom ; have it cleared up, cost what it might ; the pick of counsel should be briefed for him (they were) ; dozens of witnesses should be subpœnaed (they were) ; but unfortunately all this would cost money (it did). The girl was delighted, she could imagine nothing but a triumphant conclusion ; she even derived a sort of childish excitement from the righteous fight ; youth and honour were to be vindicated ; what was money (and she had so much of it) beside that ; she gave the boy a free hand to do what he would ; men understood these things, women could not be expected to. In these feverish days of preparation he brought her every sort of document for her signature ; attestations, cheques, transfers, they were all one to her. ' It is necessary,' he would say, ' for this or that,' naming some purpose of the Only Cause, and her signature would be wet on the paper almost before he had finished speaking. So things went until the day of vindication had drawn near, until it was actually only ' to-morrow,' so long did the man draw out his pretence of honour and decency. And then at the last, when the inevitable happened, the girl, of course, refused to believe it. ' But it's painfully true,' exasperated explainers were pointing out, ' his chambers are empty, ransacked of anything of any value at all, stripped bare ; he's packed and gone and his valet with him. Cut and run, wouldn't face the music (small wonder either) ; by now they're on the night boat to France as like as not. . . .'

" She shook her head, fighting despairingly against the inexorable floods of cold truth.

" ' And with your money,' they all gasped as they began to probe things out. ' How typical of the debonair Austin. Why on earth did you give him the chance ? What made you sign this and this . . . and that cheque ? '

" She kept silent.

" ' Why, you could have him for fraud twenty times over,' she was gravely advised by someone zealous for the law.

" The girl turned angrily on them. ' It was my money,' she cried ; ' they are my signatures. If I chose to do these things, what then ? '

" They shrugged their shoulders ; here was unparalleled idiocy (besides loss of fees).

" Someone took it on himself to catalogue the more patent of her lover's vices ; among those who knew—it seemed—he had long been a byword for dishonour, women walked wide of him ; men knew better than to lend him money ; neither men nor women took notice of his pledged word, except to laugh at it. ' Why, in this last affair, *your* affair,' her informer exclaimed, ' he has broken his word in a dozen places.'

" ' And my heart in a dozen more—oh, in a dozen more,' the girl thought to herself, staring quietly in front of her. . . .

" ' SO that is my tale,' " the girl called Miss Kent said, letting her last words die slowly in the darkness.

" Well," cried Mrs. Platt with explosive abruptness, " I do call that a real intriguing tale. What people there are about to be sure, and to think the girl couldn't tell him from a gentleman. . . ."

The darkness mercifully hid any smiles there may have been. " . . . and is that all ? " Mrs. Platt wanted to know. " Is that the end ? "

I knew, and no darkness could prevent me knowing, the almost quenched hope in the dark eyes of the girl who said, " The end, who knows ? Perhaps the man might even come back to England, under another name ; and, mixing with people who knew nothing of him, break some other girl's heart. Women have such a capacity for being hurt ; men, it seems, for hurting. . . ."

After a silence a voice came from the far horn of the semicircle of seats : it was young Carr's voice, no doubt about that, once you got used to something strained in it.

" And if this much-discussed man should come back," he asked with lumbering levity, " and by any chance hear that story, I wonder what it would mean for him. Would it have any moral ? True tales usually seem to."

" It might have this moral," the girl by my side answered, and the arms of her wickerwork chair creaked under her grasp, " it might mean this to him, that the girl he left behind in England somehow believed

in him in spite of all the things she could not help knowing were true. She was one of those queer people who believe that nobody is wholly saint or wholly sinner either; and because she loved the man she loved him altogether, the queer bad streaks in him and the shrivelled scraps of decency in between. She believed that she could do for him what no other woman could, and she waited for the chance to do it."

IT was Stevens who suggested billiards and it was precisely at that moment that he suggested it—you can usually rely on Stevens in any sort of emergency; and, under shepherding from him and myself, billiards it was—but the party was two short when we reached the billiard room. Mercifully, Mrs. Platt, having been silent for a good deal longer than was to her liking, suddenly became loquacious again and we were treated to a full account of the indolence of under-housemaids; the superiority of butlers; the gossiping nature of villagers; and the utter independence of the head gardener, who had been at Leastgate since he was a single young man living in the bothy, and at sixty-two had not the slightest intention of letting anybody tell him what to do with his gardens. In the middle of it all I found that I lacked my pipe, which was a pity, because the talk was interesting—as any talk of a foreigner discovering a new world must be—but like all true men there were moments with me when have my pipe I must or die, so down to the library I went in quest of it.

On the way across the hall I passed the drawing-room door. It was open. Why does one always look in at an open door? I don't know, but I was glad that I did then. The man was on his knees before her, his face buried in her hands. I couldn't see his eyes but somehow I could *feel* the wet of his almost hopeless tears on those cool palms. And the girl? Her face was lifted, twisted in a sort of ecstasy that comes from the happiness that hurts and the hurt that heartens you. She had come home. Oh, there was goodness in that girl, goodness was going out of her. I felt that no man, not even the poorest cur among us, could be in the benediction of that nature and not take hope, take healing from it. She bent down towards him and her lips moved very tenderly over his bowed head. . . .

I left: perhaps I had looked too long, there is something indecent about eavesdropping on a miracle.

LATER that night I looked into Stevens's room and put to him the question with which this story (and it is a true one) starts: "What" (I asked him, knocking my pipe out on the window-sill) "is the deepest and the darkest, the most bruised and the most unbreakable, the most generous, incomparably the most foolish and yet infinitely the finest thing in this wide world?"

Stevens took two puffs at his pipe before he gave the right answer.

"All you journalists are confoundedly long-winded," he said, "but I think you're justified for once. I shouldn't wonder if what you mean is a woman's heart."

We said good night on that.

STAR FEVER.

THE clangour of the star-lit sky,
When frost is kindling on the hill,
Rings in the poet's brain—
And he would fain
Lift up a torch of words, to vie
With the heaven's fire.
But how shall he aspire,
Frail mortal singer, to contend
Against the starry multitudes?
The heavenly archers bend
Their bows and aim—
His song dies out as a blown candle flame.
And from the arch of heaven, he hears
The shiver of a million starry spears.

FREDA C. BOND.



"He contrived to extricate himself from the perilous interview by falling on his knee and covering the Empress's plump hand with kisses."

LALLY OF DILLON'S

By GEORGE R. PREEDY

ILLUSTRATED BY TOM PEDDIE

"SEND me," said the Cardinal, "Lally of Dillon's."

M. Anelot permitted himself a smile. For years His Eminence, agreeably but definitely, had been avoiding Lally of Dillon's, all his schemes and all his importunities.

"You see," said the Cardinal, noting the discreet amusement on his secretary's face, "I have found some business for the gentleman at last. Belleisle and Chauvigny have spoken to me of him, lately."

"He has," suggested the secretary, slily, "another scheme in hand, perhaps?"

"He has always schemes in hand."

"Do you," asked the secretary, "altogether trust him, Your Eminence? He is very seductive, but, do you altogether put much faith in him for a serious piece of work?"

"I do not," said the Cardinal, "but, all the same, I believe that he may be useful."

That afternoon Lally of Dillon's found himself where for years he had striven to be—in the private apartments of His Eminence Cardinal Fleury, master of France—sole guardian and minister of the young King, and the supreme disposer of that immense power that Lally of Dillon's had, since he was a youth, striven to enlist in the

cause of the Stewart King and the Irish nation.

Captain Thomas Lally of Dillon's Brigade, who was a bold, ambitious, restless and brilliant soldier, had been as strenuously and continuously endeavouring to obtain an audience of the Cardinal as the astute, cautious, and tactful priest had been endeavouring to avoid him.

Captain Lally remarked on these facts with a frankness that was one of his most engaging qualities.

"I never believed that Your Eminence would ever see me or listen to any scheme of mine."

"I scarcely believed so myself, Captain Lally," replied the Cardinal in a sweet and amiable manner. "But I may be able, it seems, to take some advantage of your loyalty to your house and country, and your devotion"—he lightly stressed this—"to the interests of France."

"Neither can be doubted," said the Irishman, firmly.

And they looked at each other a little, in silence.

Each was, in his different way, a notable man. André Hercule de Fleury, Bishop of Fréjus, and Cardinal, was then eighty-five years old, possessed of an exact delicate and spiritual beauty, and the most perfect of manners. He was, perhaps, not often sincere in either his words or his actions; like most men of intelligence and experience, he occupied himself in finding diversion for that internal dissatisfaction and amazement that consumes most human beings who are not distracted by the heats of passions. The finest distraction that Cardinal Fleury had discovered was governing France; though not of brilliant abilities, he had shown a negative cleverness in never committing himself to any definite policy. His tact was as unlimited as his power, he offended no one, not even those he disliked; amiable, fastidious, serene, he surveyed the young soldier who humorously awaited the result of this scrutiny.

Captain Thomas Arthur Lally, of Dillon's Brigade of the Irish troops, in the service of the King of France, had a fine person and a fine record. He was the son of Sir Gerard Lally and the nephew of Lord Dillon. His mother was a De Brissac, and in his true titles he was one of the O'Mullaghs of Tuam or Tullaghdalie, who had been Princes of Hy Many before Strongbow came to Ireland. Cardinal Fleury had the highest opinion of the Irish exiles as accomplished soldiers and high-spirited martial gentlemen. He had found them extremely useful in the late war and he knew all about Captain Lally's record during the conquest of Lorraine; his behaviour in the trenches before Kehl, at the siege of Phillipsburg; and the act of audacious bravery by which he had saved his father's life in the lines of Ettlingen. So far the Cardinal had had nothing but approval for the behaviour of Captain Lally in particular and the Irish Brigade in general, though he had been slow to promote these brilliant officers, because of his quiet but firm understanding with Walpole's cabinet at St. James's; for all his exceptional services Lally was nothing more than a captain of brigadiers, and this final promotion had come as the reward for a most daring exploit. He had landed secretly on the English coast, visited all the Jacobite centres in England, Scotland and Ireland, drawn maps, surveyed lines of advance, and returned to Fleury's cabinet with all the details mapped out for a possible campaign.

Cardinal Fleury had not moved in the matter; Lally hardly dared to hope that he was going to move now.

"What is your last scheme, Captain Lally?" asked the prelate, smoothly, with his insinuating and deceptive air of guileless patience.

"I wish to serve my King," replied Captain Lally, simply and directly, "and the plan I have now in hand—on which I believe Belleisle and Chauvigny have already broached Your Eminence—is an alliance between France and Russia, aimed at the English and particularly at their maritime and commercial power."

"A large, bold conception, Captain Lally."

"A sound one," said the Irishman, "not founded on mere boastings and vapourings round camp-fires, not the slight and unstable talk of exiles, Your Eminence, but well planned."

"And how do you propose to set about this?" asked the Cardinal, very amiably.

"I have an uncle, sir—Peter Lacy of Ballingarry, who is a Russian Marshal, and I could get an appointment on his staff and conduct the affair under cover of that."

The handsome soldier looked with a flashing yet wistful glance at the old man, whom he hardly hoped to find sympathetic. He had tasted deeply of the studied delays, unfulfilled promises, and adroit evasions of the French Court; but there was a natural

buoyancy, ardour and fire about him which no disappointment could quell.

"You'd go anywhere, do anything, risk all?" queried the Cardinal, delicately putting his finger-tips together.

government. In Russia we have an enormous potential force; I certainly should not care to see it enlisted on the side of our enemies. And you are perfectly right, my dear Captain, in suggesting that in the



"'I'll send you,' replied the Cardinal, 'upon terms. You are, monsieur, a very accomplished gentleman, a very able soldier.'"

"In the way of honour and if it might serve my Prince—yes!" replied Lally.

"Russia," mused the Cardinal, his voice tired, and his words sunk to a murmur, "Russia is an enigma; I should certainly very much like to sound that obscure Germanic confederation and in Great Britain, France sees the most dangerous and inveterate of her foes."

"Send me to Petersburg," entreated Captain Lally.

"I'll send you," replied the Cardinal,

" upon terms. You are, monsieur, a very accomplished gentleman, a very able soldier ; you carried off that English business as if you were a very able diplomat—and yet, I am not entirely sure of you. Eh, do not be offended. I have had no opportunity of testing you on every point. But I will send you to Russia upon terms."

" I will go," cried Lally, " on any terms ! "

" These, then." The Cardinal leaned easily forward, drew a small paper from between the pages of a book which rested on his desk. " You will go to St. Petersburg without credentials, without a passport. You will sound the Empress and her favourites ; you will broach your scheme and see how it is received. You will represent France, but unofficially ; you may do what you can in your leisure for your Prince and your friends, but you will never forget, Captain Lally, that you are an officer in the army of His Most Christian Majesty."

" That's twice you have reminded me of that," said Captain Lally. " Now, I wonder why ? "

" I wish," said the priest, suavely, " to be assured of your loyalty under every possible test. I do not suggest anything so crude as betrayal or negligence ; but it is possible that you might be tempted away from the service of France."

" It is not possible," said Lally, " while I'm in Dillon's Brigade—and Dillon's Brigade fights for France."

The Cardinal slightly inclined his head as if he courteously accepted this statement.

" Do you take my terms ? " he asked. " They are not very good. You will go as a volunteer diplomat. The King will know how to recompense your devotion."

" There's only one recompense I want," flashed Lally, " help for King James."

With a courteous smile the prelate proceeded : " In the event of failure, you may be disowned. You will write to me the most detailed despatches of your progress and of your affairs in Russia in general ; and I, if you are successful, will send to you credentials and authority to form an alliance."

" I'll start to-morrow," said Captain Lally, eagerly.

" You take considerable risks, you know ? " smiled the Cardinal. " Russia is an unknown country—I believe the Empress and her favourites are little more than barbarians."

" The easier for that," said Lally, confidently.

" You think so ? Well, if you can manage an imperious woman, possessed of unlimited power, and the savages whom she has elevated into her confidence, you will be indeed a most useful person, my dear Captain Lally ; there are not," he added, thoughtfully, " many men would undertake such a commission."

" I have waited for years," replied the impetuous soldier, " for any chance. I have not the least doubt of a complete success."

Cardinal Fleury smiled : adroit and astute as he was, he could not judge how much merit might lie beneath this superb self-confidence. Of the Irishman's reckless courage, brilliant personality, seductive good-looks, attractive accomplishments and swift intelligence there could be no doubt, but for the Cardinal's ultimate purpose he required more solid qualities than these.

" Remember," he said, fingering his little paper, " you depend entirely upon your own wits ; you will have no more instructions than those I have already given you."

" But if," asked Captain Lally, " I am successful, if I bring them to the point of an alliance, then you will acknowledge me and send me authority ? "

The Cardinal bowed :

" You must trust me, my dear Captain Lally, even as I trust you."

He carefully sealed with his signet the little paper which he had now folded across.

" All that I shall give you is this," he added ; " you will put it somewhere secure —screwed into the hollow of your sword-hilt, stitched inside your boot—and if there should arise, as there may arise, in Russia, a moment of emergency, you will open it and find therein my instructions and advice. On your honour, Captain Lally, you will not open that paper until you are in such grave and perilous crisis."

" On my honour," agreed Lally, eagerly and gaily. He put the paper into a small note-book which he carried in his breast-pocket, already swollen with many love-letters (each of which bore a different signature), a relic rescued from the family chapel by his grandfather before he took part in " the flight of the wild geese," and several papers covered with lists of possible Jacobites, and diagrams of landing-places in England and Ireland.

The old man, sitting motionless in his glittering silk and fine lawn, watched the young man as he put away his pocket-book, noted the fine athletic figure in the showy

regimentals of Dillon's Brigade, the handsome dark face, rich black hair so carefully curled, powdered and pomaded, the air of ardour, power and pride. . . . "I wonder," he murmured to himself, "I wonder. . . ." Aloud, he said:

"You cut a very fine figure on a captain's pay—how do you contrive, you Irish?"

"Debts and the cards," smiled Captain Lally, briefly.

"It's a queer life," mused the Cardinal; "you're everywhere but in your own country. You can do everything, but you couldn't keep your own estates and titles. A strange people!"

"We don't ask for pity, Your Eminence; we give service for what we get. My father was forty-four years with the colours—and only a Colonel. And I'm not over-advanced in being a captain of brigadiers. We've learnt what it is to be exiled—we're none of us nice, or difficult, or fastidious, save where our Prince or our honour is concerned."

"You're loyal," said the Cardinal; "remember, when you open that paper, that I have staked on your loyalty."

"You know the family I come of," said Captain Lally.

The Cardinal reflected that it was odd this young man's ancestors had been princes of Ireland when those of the present King of France had been no more than gentlemen . . . the Cardinal was surprised by Captain Lally's next action.

The young man crossed to his chair and, with a sudden impetuous grace, knelt before him.

"Will Your Eminence forget," he asked, "that you are a Cardinal and I but a poor soldier, and remember only that you are a priest and I a penitent, and give me your blessing before I go."

It was not often that Cardinal Fleury was reminded that he was a priest, and it was still less often that he was asked for his blessing. His delicate cheek was flushed with the faint, cold flush of old age, but he gave the blessing with a gracious dignity, peering out of his dim eyes at the ardent and passionate beauty of the dark young face looking up at him with such ingenuous trust; and again, as the Captain rose and left him, after warmly kissing his withered hand, the Cardinal said to himself: "I wonder—I wonder. . . ."

Belleisle, Chauvigny, and all the officers of Dillon's and Clare's tried to dissuade Lally from undertaking the Cardinal's secret mission. Belleisle doubted if he would return from Muscovy, dead or alive; some of the Jacobites who had, during their adventurous period of exile, penetrated as far as St. Petersburg, assured him that nothing whatever was to be done at the barbaric northern court.

"It's a chance," said Captain Lally, "and I'll take it. I've never asked any more from mortals but chances."

He said good-bye to his many friends and to a certain lady, who took his departure most lamentably, and who insisted on presenting him with a dressing-case of which every bottle had a diamond in the stopper. She knew the poverty concealed behind the flashing bravado of his appearance, and hoped that these jewels might serve him in an emergency. Lally accepted the gift and returned the worth of it in a pair of rose-coloured shoes with pearl knots for buckles. The lady was in despair, and importuned heaven for vengeance on Cardinal Fleury—old, cold, crafty man!—for sending out of Paris, in the gay season of the winter, the most charming of all the Irish officers. Lally cared nothing either for the dubious encouragements of his friends, the tears and regrets of the lady, or the discouraging prophecies that accompanied him on his peculiar journey.

He had never—since the time when, as a boy of seven, his father had taken him to serve beside him in the trenches, to learn something (as Sir Gerald said, grimly) of the look and smell of war—asked for a better fortune than to struggle face to face and to the utmost of his ability with his hereditary foe, the English, either on the battlefield or in the council cabinet.

ACCOMPANIED by no one save an Irish body-servant, Captain Lally proceeded as far as Riga; there, as he could show no passport, he was immediately thrown into prison, but Admiral Gordon—a Stewart agent—procured his release, and Captain Lally, his baggage and servant restored, continued on his journey and, arriving at St. Petersburg in the gloom of a Russian winter, attached himself at once to the staff of his uncle, Marshal Peter Lacy of Ballingarry, who received him with affection for his person, but no enthusiasm for his errand.

"Why, it's easier than taking a trench full of dead men," said Lally, cheerfully, and entreated his uncle to carry him to wait upon the Empress.

"It's not she with whom you'll have to

deal, Tom," said Marshal Peter Lacy of Ballingarry, " but the man Buren, who she has made Courland—who is her master."

" I'll deal with both of them," smiled Captain Lally.

Marshal Peter Lacy of Ballingarry remarked : " It's a queer life we Irish have, eh ? "

" But you seem to flourish here, sir, and the country is well enough ? "

" But I'd sooner be in Paris, Tom," sighed the Marshal. " They're not civilised here, to my thinking."

" They make a fine show," said Captain Lally, " but here or there, it's an exile's life."

Marshal Peter Lacy of Ballingarry had no hope of any success for his nephew's mission, but on an early occasion he presented his new staff officer to the Empress Anna Ivanowna, niece of the great Peter, formerly Duchess of Courland, a widow, and Empress of All the Russias.

This formidable lady had already heard something of Captain Lally. She knew of his arrest at Riga, and also of the rumours which said the young soldier was a French agent in disguise, the fully-accredited ambassador of Cardinal Fleury ; she was flattered by so much attention from the greatest nation in the world.

Lally of Dillon's made a very fine figure. He considered himself infinitely superior in birth and breeding to any of the Russians, and this gave a certain lustre of pride to his seductive manners, and supplied him with a natural pomp which took the place of a retinue or credentials. The mistress of All the Russias was of an exuberant beauty, coarse and heavy, with a look at once capricious and sullen. There was a shade of savagery in her flat Tartar features, a wilful and passionate *abandon* in her manners, a violence in her speech—all new to Captain Lally.

He awaited her pleasure with a manly composure, while she looked him up and down as if he were a new toy. Satisfied with the result of her insolent scrutiny, she smiled with a voluptuous grace which made her appear handsome in a barbaric fashion.

Captain Lally only returned the smile in the most formal fashion, for he had observed standing behind the Empress's chair, the favourite of whom his uncle had told him—the Duke of Courland, who was as definitely master of the Empress as the Empress was mistress of All the Russias. This person was regarding the Irishman with a scowl and a sneer.

The Empress asked if it were true that he had been sent by Cardinal Fleury ?

Captain Lally, with dexterous boldness, plunged immediately into his mission, for he saw that, with Anna Ivanowna, delays and subtleties would only irritate. With knowledge, with enthusiasm, Captain Lally sketched his scheme—the alliance between France and Russia for the immediate overthrow of England and the Empire. . . . As he spoke, Anna smiled.

Lally returned the bold encouragement of the Empress with a cautious grace, not only because she was not greatly to his taste—he could, if need were, have assumed that she was—but because he was conscious of Courland's lowering glance in the background. He, therefore, adroitly disengaged himself from the attention of the Empress and addressed himself to Buren.

Ivan Ernest Buren, Duke of Courland, was of lowly birth and—as his enemies often reminded each other and, when they dare, the favourite himself—the grandson of a groom. He was handsome, able, splendid and unscrupulous.

Captain Lally, to whom he was far more important than the Empress, regarded him with a secret and impartial anxiety, wondering how far he could bring this man into his designs. Courland, who was accustomed to the bitter and scarcely-disguised disdain and contempt of the Russian nobles, instantly responded to these flattering attentions from the elegant young foreigner, and invited Lally to a private conference in his cabinet. Anna Ivanowna sulked and flounced, but a sombre glance from her formidable favourite reduced her to a sullen submission.

Courland, with an unsmiling face and folded arms, awaited Captain Lally's disclosures.

In spite if his superficial French graces, lace and powder, brocades and ribbands and stars, Courland was very much to the Irishman's mind like the dark, gloomy and savage bear which has been taken as an emblem of his incomprehensible country, but Captain Lally was too elated at his opportunity to consider the hopelessness of his task.

With easy assurance and deferential civility he proceeded to lay before the Minister his plan. He spoke to Courland as if he spoke to the Emperor of all the Russias, caressing him with many artfully-turned assurances of the great Cardinal's regard and the estimation in which he, the great Duke of Courland, was held at Paris. Humiliated, thwarted and slighted on every

hand by his countrymen, who regarded him as an upstart, Courland was entranced by the subtle flatteries of the Irishman. But he showed more shrewdness and more self-command than Captain Lally had altogether expected.

"Who are you?" he asked. "Where are your credentials, and why is not the French Ambassador in Petersburg entrusted with this mission?"

"Because," smiled the Irishman, "it's altogether too confidential, perilous, and nice. As for my credentials, the first *express* will bring them, together with the articles of our alliance ready engrossed, the moment that Your Highness is prepared to sign."

"You come to me with this," said Courland, staring at him—"not to the Empress? And yet she regarded you favourably enough."

Captain Lally spoke as one man of the world to another.

"It is easy to see," he remarked, "that Your Highness can do what you please with Her Majesty."

Courland appeared satisfied, though his manner was sombre. When Lally left the Peterhof he sent at once an exultant despatch to Cardinal Fleury and begged that his credentials and the articles of the treaty and all further instructions in the matter might be sent immediately to him in St. Petersburg. He urged the need for haste lest the Courlander change his mind, or Anna Ivanowna discover another favourite. "*At present he is her ears, her eyes, her mouth.*" At the end of his letter, significantly underlined, he wrote: "*Russia can put into the field a hundred and thirty-thousand regulars and sixty thousand Cossacks: Your Eminence would surely desire to see these ranged on the side of France.*"

Marshal Peter Lacy of Ballingarry was a little taken aback by his nephew's audacity, yet could not withhold applause for what appeared to be a brilliant success. Courland and the Empress alike caressed and flattered him, nay, they seemed to compete for his favours.

Captain Lally, steering his way delicately between their perilous yet gratifying advances, never forgot the cause he had in hand. Not only did he continue to press the French alliance, but he roused up a party for the Jacobites, and pushed his master's cause with restless and ardent energy. He found, however, both time and occasion to grace the festivities of the Peterhof, to soothe the Empress and flatter Courland. He had observed that Anna Ivanowna was not only infatuated with Courland, but was afraid of him. The powerful, passionate and violent woman was silent before the least glance from under those scowling brows; the least word of reproof that fell from the groom's grandson. Lally knew that Courland watched him, spied on him, and he by no means underrated the Russian's ability, while daily he glowed with a deep and ardent expectancy of success.

But as the weeks went on he heard nothing from Cardinal Fleury, although the ordinary accredited Ambassador in St. Petersburg received his usual letters and instructions.

"Well, Tom," advised Marshal Peter Lacy of Ballingarry, "I'm not denying that you've had the luck. But you would be wise to bring your business to a conclusion while the wind blows fair; it all seems very smooth and glittering at the Peterhof, but it's like a bog beneath."

"And I'm walking as if it were a bog," smiled Captain Lally. "And how can I bring the business to a conclusion if Cardinal Fleury does not write?"

"It may be he doesn't intend to write," said Marshal Peter Lacy, suspiciously; "maybe your hopes flew too high and you misunderstood His Eminence, Tom."

"Nay, his instructions were clear enough. He said he trusted me and I said I trusted him," said the Irishman, simply, "and he gave me his blessing."

"However prudent you are," added the Marshal, as a further warning, "I should be yet more prudent. I've known those who have been loaded with honours and ribbands and stars one day poked out of their beds by bayonets and driven through the snow to Siberia the next."

Captain Lally was, however, confident in himself; he was convinced that he could bring the Russians into an agreement and convinced that Cardinal Fleury would write. At balls, suppers and banquets, at sledging parties on the Neva and private conferences with Courland, he pressed his points, one after one, and lost not the finest or the slightest opportunity of furthering the cause of his King and of France. His success was rapid to a point, and there Courland stuck; although he appeared convinced by the Irishman's arguments he refused to give the final sanction to the scheme of the alliance with Fleury. Lally, whose easy brilliance

concealed a violent impatience of delay and opposition, the sluggishness of fools and the trickery of knaves, suddenly put into execution what his uncle conceived the

" but, as you know, my minister, the Duke of Courland, deals with affairs ; he advises me in everything."

" Does he always," insinuated the



" Lally returned the bold encouragement of the Empress with a cautious grace."

most reckless plan of ignoring the favourite and dealing direct with the Empress.

" I like your schemes, Captain Lally," responded Anna, with a sleepy, smiling air,

audacious Irishman, " advise Your Majesty to your own advantage ? "

The Empress stared at him, a smouldering light in her slanting Slavonic eyes.

" Do you seek to undermine Courland ? " she asked in a thick, drowsy voice.

She put her hand on her brocaded skirts at the hip and gazed at Captain Lally with an expression that he could not read.



The Irishman took bold measures and leapt, preliminarily, as he had leapt the trenches at Phillipsburg :

" Where one man has got another may get, and the man who has climbed up can always be pulled down."

Anna Ivanowna leaned forward and patted Captain Lally's hand where it rested on the malachite table.

" I like brave fellows," she said, slowly, " and what you say is, of course, quite true. Courland exists only by my favour, and that might be won any day by another."

Captain Lally kept his head in the face of these amazing advances. He thought that the Empress was like a sulky, heartless and slumbrous tigress ; but he contrived to look as if he considered her a goddess.

Anna Ivanowna continued to pat his hand.

" Courland," she grumbled, " is the worst tempered man in the world. If you can get rid of him without any trouble to me you may have his place."

Captain Lally now understood what his uncle had meant when he had warned him that, despite the gay splendour and the opulent luxury of St. Petersburg, the Russians were really savages. He contrived to extricate himself from the perilous interview by falling on his knee and covering the Empress's plump hand with kisses, while he made meaningless and non-committal terms and expressions of devotion, withdrawing finally under the pretence of being too moved to continue any longer in the dazzling presence of the Romanoff.

He went direct to Courland and was received with the usual impassive, impersonal and inscrutable courtesy that the Russian always showed.

" I'll give you something," thought the reckless Irishman, " to quicken up your slow ways."

Aloud, he said : " Courland, you cannot keep the representative of a great King waiting about like a supplicant in antechambers. Will you or will you not have this alliance on the terms which I have suggested ? "

" I'll wait—I'll consider," replied the Russian, with sullen calm.

" No, you will do neither," replied Captain Lally. " If you, sir, do not care to sign, the Empress will."

" Never," smiled Courland, contemptuously.

" Easily," said Captain Lally. " She may be afraid of you, but I am not. I am inured to intrigue and the lady is fickle ; it may be if it came to a push—we are both adventurers and ought to be able to understand each other," he added, with a smile.

The Russian considered this without hostility or malice.

" I never threaten," added Lally, steadily, " but I might give you a warning. Fallen favourites have ugly treatment in this country. From what I can hear, it is either Siberia, or the Fortress of Peter and Paul."

Courland looked at his rival with a keen, steady interest.

" Do you think," he asked without resentment, " that you could supplant me in the favour of the Empress ? "

" Without betraying a lady's confidence," replied the Irishman, " I can assure you, my dear Duke, that I am certain I could. I can also assure you," he added, with that air of engaging candour which he usually found so successful, " that I have not the least desire to do so. Not only are you better fitted to rule the Russias than I, but my duties and affections are engaged at another shrine."

" Still," said Courland, " I suppose you would do it for the sake of your country and your King ? "

" Certainly I would, and needs must if you keep me dallying any longer."

Captain Lally stood over the Russian with his terms, exactly as if he stood over him with a pistol at his forehead. Courland seemed so fully to appreciate the situation that Captain Lally had even a higher opinion of his intelligence than before.

" If you undermine me you destroy a friend, Captain Lally. I'll sign your articles, and immediately. Bring them with you to-night."

And, with an amiable look and a civil withdrawal, he dismissed the elated Irishman, who hastened to his uncle with the story of his triumph.

Certainly his victory had been brilliant, rapid and decisive. But Marshal Peter Lacy of Ballingarry was able to point out a fatal flaw in his success. " Where are the articles that Courland is to sign ? Fleury has not written."

Fleury did not write. Even Captain Lally came to the end of his excuses. He had sent off despatch after despatch, telling of his success, and demanding the promised support from Cardinal Fleury. But no answer came.

" You're in it, Tom," sighed Marshal Peter Lacy of Ballingarry. " Don't I know what it is serving foreigners ? "

Captain Lally himself began to lose heart. Not all his ardour could suffice any longer to hold the scales between the Empress and Courland. Nor could his utmost caresses, insinuations and flatteries, frankness and plain-speaking, avail him any further with the Russian, who every day demanded, in a more peremptory tone, his credentials and papers.

Marshal Peter Lacy of Ballingarry advised him to leave the country before the frontiers were closed to him, but Captain Lally scorned a retreat . . . even when Courland

haughtily summoned him to the Peterhof and, breaking into a violent fury, threatened him with arrest as an impostor.

"You've fooled me!" roared the Russian. "Cardinal Fleury never sent you! You have no power to offer me an alliance with France!"

"You've the word of an Irish gentleman for your assurance," replied Captain Lally, calmly; "and as for Cardinal Fleury's despatches being slow on the way, if you kept your roads in better condition, may be they would have been here by now."

"The road to Siberia," shouted Courland, "is in excellent condition, as you can soon test for yourself!"

"It's been worn smooth by the feet of all the exiles who you've sent there, I suppose," smiled Captain Lally. "It must be very diverting to have so much authority. But, as for me, I'd have you remember that I am in Dillon's Brigade and serve the King of France."

"The king of hell!" roared the Russian, who had flared from a long sombre smiling patience to a savage fury. "I'll not believe you serve any other master! Your Government disowns you!"

Captain Lally escaped from this interview and endeavoured to obtain one with the Empress, but she refused this favour, and when he chanced to meet her in the corridors of the Peterhof, scowled upon him; it was evident that her patience also was exhausted and that she regarded Lally as a discredited adventurer.

"I warned you, Tom," sighed Marshal Peter Lacy of Ballingarry; "now get out of the country while you can."

Lally was obdurate; his bravery was reckless to the point of foolhardiness. He would not leave St. Petersburg while there was a chance that the Cardinal might write; he could not endure to forgo his success—so quick, so unexpected. But he did not deny to his uncle that he was in a confounded difficulty and he bethought him of the little *billet* which Cardinal Fleury had given him, and which was only to be opened in a moment of emergency. This moment had surely now arrived, and Captain Lally broke the seal and read these lines:

"*As you should be in considerable danger before you read this I think it just to inform you that your mission was a mere sham. I never intended to support you. I merely sent you to St. Petersburg as a last expedient to rid myself of one whose importunities I could not otherwise silence. No one but an Irishman would have undertaken so forlorn a hope. Adieu, my dear Captain, I fear for ever!*

With a thousand regrets,

FLEURY."

Captain Lally clapped the paper down in front of his uncle. "That's the way they treat us," he said, with bitterness—"fools, dupes and catspaws, eh?"

"The mean old viper!" cried Marshal Peter Lacy of Ballingarry. "I warned you, Tom, there's not one of them that you can trust the length of your nose."

"He never thought I'd be successful," said Lally, grimly; "had he known that he would have treated me differently. Now, how to get out of Russia as quickly as I came in, and get back to Paris and tell the old, lying cowardly priest this is no way to treat a gentleman who risks everything for his King."

With that he flung off to the Peterhof to face the matter out; he was never a man to slink away or leave his work unfinished. He haughtily demanded an interview with Courland, pointed out in smooth and impressive sentences the difficulties of conducting any negotiations behind the backs of the Ambassadors of the Powers concerned, of the necessity of maintaining a strict secrecy in the affair, declared his intention to return to Paris and finally arrange matters personally with the Cardinal, and, as a final throw, with unfaltering audacity he suggested to Courland that a Russian envoy should be sent with him to Paris, there to conclude the negotiations on the spot. The Russian's furies were overborne; he was baffled, impressed, and dazzled by the splendid advantages to himself which the Irishman eloquently depicted as the result of the proposed treaty. He at length gave a reluctant and sullen consent to Captain Lally's departure for Paris.

But the Irishman was not to leave St. Petersburg without further obstacles to overcome. The Empress sent for him. Marshal Peter Lacy of Ballingarry groaned at the summons, but Lally's headstrong and reckless spirit did not falter.

"I've managed Courland and I'll manage the woman."

The Empress received him favourably. She had an unexpected and astounding proposal to make—no less than that Captain Lally should leave the French service and enter her own. "She cared nothing," she said, with sleepy frankness, "for either

alliances with France or any other power, but she very much liked to see handsome and spirited young men wearing her splendid uniform; and she was sure that Captain Lally, to whom she would give the command of a regiment of Cossacks with the title of Brigadier-General, would make himself both agreeable and useful."



Captain Lally considered the glittering temptation—only one thing held him back: Cardinal Fleury's words—"*I trust you to remember your sworn loyalty to France.*" He could rule the Empress, he could oust Courland, he could govern the Russias, he could make himself a prince in name as he was in blood, nay, possibly an emperor—for Courland had the disadvantage of being a married man, but he—he was free . . . and, against all this, the obscure rank of captain of brigadiers, in the service of a country which had never rewarded him for his exertions, and a man who had duped him miserably.

But Captain Lally's loyalty was to Dillon's and to France. He gave the Empress fair words and evasion and, without even taking leave of his uncle, escaped across the frontier. Travelling rapidly, with fury in his heart, he reached Paris in a passion of rage, and presented himself before the Cardinal.



"'That's the way they treat us,' he said with bitterness—'fools, dupes and catspaws, eh?'"

"Diplomacy goes slowly," smiled the old man; "it may be, if you had waited until I had sent."

"Monseigneur," replied the outraged soldier, "a captain of brigadiers goes straight to the breach; one who, in his zeal for the King, courts inglorious danger, ought not to be left to the mercy of strangers little better than savages, with the result that, having entered Russia as a lion, I regard myself fortunate in escaping like a fox."

The old Cardinal smiled.

"The anger of the Captain strikes terror into the priest," he rejoined, meekly. "When we have read your reports we shall doubtless have occasion to praise your wit, if we may not your patience."

"And what of your little paper, Monseigneur?" asked Captain Lally, with a heaving breast and flashing eyes.

"That," said Fleury, "can be explained when I have read your reports." And he laughed a little: "So you came back, after all! You know, my dear Captain, I hardly expected to see you; those barbarians are very dangerous when roused."

"I came back," said Captain Lally, "because I had promised to do so. My service is with Dillon's—but I'm not sure that I won't ask to be released of that, and go back to St. Petersburg."

He told the Cardinal, with contemptuous brevity, of the Empress's offer.

"Which you refused?"

"Perhaps now, Monseigneur, Your Eminence knows how unnecessary it was, twice, to remind me where my duty lay."

Cardinal Fleury read the despatches which Captain Lally had sent from Russia and those which he had brought with him. Accurate, able, concise, and just in their conclusions, they contained a complete survey of the court and country of Russia; their conditions and potential forces—how France might utilise these towards the accomplishment of the great aim of the Irishman's life, the defeat and overthrow of England and the English. The Cardinal had sufficient ability and clear-sightedness to appreciate this brilliant work. He summoned the Captain to a second interview, and this time received him in his bed, for a chill had taken the Cardinal and he lay shivering in an aguish fit. He gave Captain Lally his white, feeble hand to kiss.

"This is all very bold and audacious," he smiled, "but I am not at all sure that it wouldn't be successful. Aye, Captain Lally, I have almost made up my mind to send you as Envoy-Extraordinary to Russia with full credentials, and escort, and complete power to make this alliance."

"And why," exclaimed Captain Lally, "did you not do that before?"

"That is perfectly easy to understand. I was not sure of you. You had not been tempted."

"And the paper?" asked Lally. "Why did you give me that? Many a man, Your Eminence, would have been driven to despair or some desperate action on discovering that paper disowning him in a moment of peril."

"Many a man," murmured the Cardinal, "but not the man I was looking for. It was a frightful test, no doubt, Captain Lally; but I believed you would survive it."

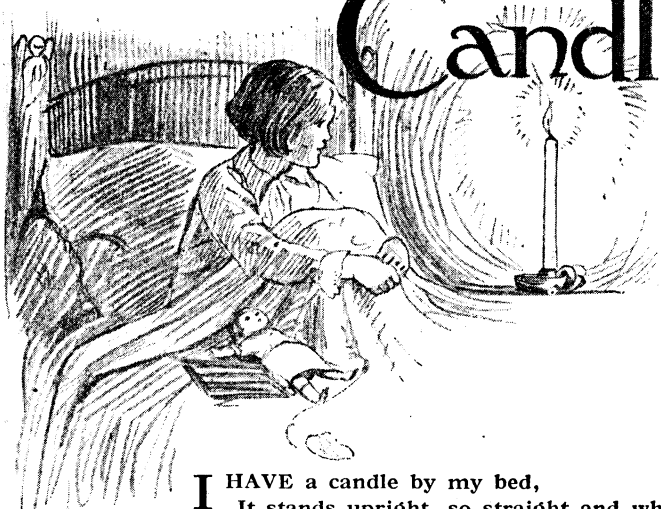
Lally gazed at the frail, sick old man in the great ornate bed.

"You remained loyal," smiled the Cardinal, "you did not leave the French service, and you extricated yourself from a situation of appalling difficulty. All this proves that you are exactly the person for whom I was looking. Rest assured, my dear Captain, that Russia and France will march together to fight the battles of your Chevalier St. George."

For three days a golden light of intoxicating hope and glory surrounded the valiant captain of brigadiers. On the fourth day Cardinal Fleury died and his successor repudiated the Russian scheme.

It was Irish luck—Lally's luck, and taken with a laugh. The captain of brigadiers returned to his regiment to build another house of cards—to shelter a Lost Cause.

Candle-light



I HAVE a candle by my bed,
It stands upright, so straight and white,
And round about soft rays are shed
Of golden-yellow edged with red—
O, Candle-light's a pretty light!

Upon the Tree shine candles gay,
A sparkling sight to tree-top height,
Like misty halos in array
To crown the Child of Christmas Day—
O, Candle-light's a pretty light.

A lantern in a Stall I see
On Christmas night, so starry bright,
The little Christ-child it must be
Asleep upon His Mother's knee—
O, Candle-light's a pretty light!

M. G. RHODES.



HIS LUCK AND HIS LADY

A STORY OF FOUR CHRISTMAS DAYS

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

"AS merry a Christmas as can be expected under the circumstances, Hollis," the dry old head master wished the lad who was left on his hands for Christmas. He shook the boy's hand and left a pound note in it.

"Thank you, sir," said the lad. "You're very kind."

"A merry Christmas, Hollis," said the head master's fussy little wife. She shook hands, too, and gave him a muffler which she had knitted and a ticket for the pantomime.

"Thank you very much," the boy acknowledged. "A merry Christmas to *you*, Mrs. Reeves."

He gave them a pipe and a pin-tray respectively, and good wishes which were quite sincere. They *had* been kind to him; had moved him to their own house for the holidays, given him a nice bedroom, and didn't fuss about bounds, *et cet.*, as he was a big, trustworthy fellow. But they were sixty and sixty-five, and not very sociable people; and Lawrence Hollis was sixteen, and loved his fellow-men—and girls. So he said to himself, "Merry Christmas be blowed!"

"Fine brisk morning for a walk," said the head master after breakfast, and retired to his study.

"You'll go to church, I suppose?" said the head master's wife, and went downstairs to see cook.

Lawrence chose the walk, and went along the lane to the pond, hoping it had frozen harder than he expected. He found it just iced over, but not nearly bearing. He "skated" a number of stones across it.

"Merry Christmas!" he muttered. "My word! Nothing to do till to-morrow afternoon."

He was playing for the village in a football match then. "If they don't say it's too frosty," he added disconsolately. "It's freezing too hard for footer, and not hard enough for skating. Merry Christmas, indeed!" He shot a few more stones viciously across the ice.

"I wish I was a stone," he said aloud; and then a very pleasant laugh came from behind him. He turned and faced a very pleasant girl, about fifteen; a dark, pert, pretty little creature in a brown fur coat and cap. The collar of the coat was pulled up over her ears, and her hands were in the pockets. "All furs and grin," he told himself approvingly.

He took off his school cap politely, being a well-mannered youth.

"I say," he asked. "Can I talk to you? I've nobody else to talk to. If I had I'd want to know you all the same."

"If you hadn't said that I wouldn't let you," she declared, with a toss of her saucy head. "I thought you looked jolly pippy. That's why I came round to you, really."

"Good sport," he acknowledged. "I've had to stay behind for the holidays, you see. Nothing doing! So I *can* talk to you, can't I?"

She nodded.

"What name do you talk under?" she inquired.

"Hollis; upper fifth."

"I knew the Hollis, and the old form doesn't matter. I meant your talking-to name."

"Lawrence," he told her. "Lonely Lawrence, eh? Present social moment excepted. My people are on the way home from South Africa. They've something catching at my aunt's—would have at Christmas. So here I am!"

"Are they awful to you at the school?" she inquired.

"Oh, no. The Head moved me to his own house. They're jolly decent, but—— Well, you know what old people are! They're the old, old sort! Will you come for a walk with me?"

"All right, Mr. Lonely Lawrence," she agreed.

"Thank you, Miss——?"

"Francis Travers. They call me Frank. They say I ought to have been a boy."

"Don't agree a bit! Let's go up Breakneck, Hill, shall we? . . . I've a name of my own for you; Xmas Girl! X. G. for short. Twiggy?"

"I twiggy things all right," she asserted, with the usual toss of the impudent head. "I'll call you L. L. Twiggy that!"

"Lucky Lawrence!" he said, with a laugh that wasn't quite all laugh. The girl seemed to understand the part that wasn't; knocked an elbow against him without taking her hand from her pocket.

"It's rotten, isn't it?" she said. "I'm glad I met you."

"I suppose you couldn't this afternoon?" he suggested.

"Imposs," she declared. "I'm staying at the Hall; my uncle's. Well, that's what I call him. He's a second cousin really. You see, they're having a lot of people to dinner—two o'clock 'din,' you know—and I'll have to stay in and play games for the rest of the day; forfeits and all that." He sighed. "I say. I can generally wangle uncle. I'll tell him about poor old L. L. I *might* get him to ask you there."

"Good old X. G.!" cried Lawrence.

"Shall I go now?" she asked.

"Come for the walk first," he entreated. "I don't suppose he will, and I want to make sure of a bit of merry Christmas. That's you. Do you know what I thought when I turned round and saw you? 'Furs and grin!' . . . You're looking like it now."

"I thought 'great donkey,'" she told him. "So you are! . . . How much start will you give me to that gate?"

The result was a dead-heat. Lawrence took his Christmas girl by the arm, when he caught her, and ran her along; and after that they seemed to have known each other for years.

When they parted she promised to do her very best "to wangle the invite"; and that, if she didn't succeed, she'd meet him the next morning at the pond; also she turned and waved and called "Cheerio, L. L.!" as she went; and Lawrence called "Cheerio, X. G.! That stands for 'xcellent young lady!"

Soon after he arrived home the Squire 'phoned to the schoolmaster.

"I say, Reeves. You've a boy left on your hands for Christmas, haven't you? . . . What sort of a chap is he? . . . I don't mean lessons and games, but the young bounder himself. . . . Nice lad, eh? Well, don't you think he'd like a bit of young company on Christmas Day? I've a lot of boys and girls here, and he seems to have got off with one of the young frocks. . . . Then tell him to run along here now and have dinner and the usual tomfoolery afterwards."

Running wasn't quick enough for Lawrence. He went at eighteen miles an hour upon his bicycle. The Squire introduced him to everybody in general, and then handed him over to "Frankie" to make him feel at home.

"And now you can't call yourself L. L. any more," she told him.

"By Jove, I can," he declared. "L for lucky! And I'll call you X. G. for 'xtra good!"

"Only to people who are good to me," she told him.

"Then you'll be good to me all right," he said. "Shake on it!"

They shook; and something like an electric current seemed to run up both young arms, and between black eyes and brown eyes. . . . And then the gong was sounded for dinner.

Lawrence sat beside his Christmas girl at dinner and tea and supper. He pulled the raisins out of the flaming snapdragon for her; chose her for the one he loved best (a kiss goes with the selection) at forfeits; let her beat him in the final heat of the musical chairs; called her out every time he dared at Postman's knock, and generally appropriated her—and she him. "Rather sweet, those childish affairs," someone said.

"Just watch that boy and Frankie!" He kissed her five times under the mistletoe; and, when he was going, twice without it.

"That's because I like you," he said, after the first kiss.

"Why do you think I let you?" she asked, looking down at her foot tracing the pattern of the linoleum.

"By the pond at eleven?" he whispered, "old X. G."

"Yes, then, L. L."

"Lucky me! . . . Frankie, what the L stands for will depend on you, I expect."

She looked up at last.

"Then I expect you'll be all right," she said.

That was the occasion of the second kiss; and they never quite forgot that kiss all their lives.

They met at the pond twice, and he saw her home after the football-match. He had scored two goals and he said, "That's one apiece. We'll share our good luck!" And she said, "Good or bad," and suddenly she began to blink. "You see if I don't!" she told him; and then he dropped his football-bag and seized her.

That was the end of the "sweet childish affair." The next morning he had a note from her:

Dear L. L.,
Mum's ill. Uncle's motoring me up to her. I'll write. *X. G.*

She didn't give any address; and his people marconigraphed for him to go to Madeira at once to meet them, as the death of his father's partner compelled his immediate return to Cape Town. He left a request at the school for letters to be forwarded to him. One from his Christmas girl was duly posted on to Madeira; but it never reached him. He lost both his parents, and over six years passed before he went home to England. The Christmas girl was at the back of his mind now, in the brain's lumber-room; but she was *there* all right. He always recollected her at Christmas-time; and when he was considering going home, he always weighed in "and I might run across X. G."

II.

ON the Christmas Day seven years after his Christmas Day at school Lawrence was lonely again. He had been unable to find a job in England for some months, and hadn't enough money to pay his fare back to South Africa, where he could have obtained one. In despair he applied to his old head master for an under-mastership in the school. The old man didn't think much of his qualifications for school-mastering, but he found him a job as a clerk in the office of a friend, one John Grant, a large manufacturer at Nesselton, about ten miles from the school. Lawrence did quite well in the office, and was on good enough terms with his colleagues and the members of his athletic clubs, regarded as a good sport, and an acquisition to the cricket, tennis and football teams; but socially he didn't "fit." He had come down below his own class, and didn't want to be intimately friendly with his acquaintances of the working and clerking class. So, when Christmas Day came, he was spending it alone in his lodgings. He proposed to sleep through the day, as even the Working Men's Club, where he sometimes played billiards, was shut; but unfortunately he woke early, and kept wide awake. So he decided to go for a long walk.

"I might as well trot over to the old school as anywhere," he told himself. "Ten miles each way. I could walk that easily; but it might leave me a bit stiff for the footer match to-morrow. I'd better go in the 10.15 bus and walk back. Might meet a Christmas girl!"

He had abandoned the idea which was at the back of his mind when he came to England, of meeting the original Girl again, as the Hall had been in different hands for several years, and she wouldn't be visiting there; but the memory of her came at Christmas, and indeed at other times. If he had been prosperous, he would probably have made a vigorous attempt to trace her; but he felt that he was "no catch," and she'd be better without his acquaintance, "especially if she keeps a sweet tooth for me, like I always have for her." But all the same, the reason which made him choose the old pond for his goal was the thought of his Christmas girl: "All furs and grin!"

He arrived at the village soon after eleven. It was an uncomfortable, drizzling morning, and people were sensibly keeping Christmas indoors. He only passed two men on his way to the pond; stood there gazing at it with the rain dripping from his cap.

"Lonely Lawrence again," he thought. "Chucked my luck when I lost my Christmas girl. Blighted young ass not to have got her address from the Hall before I left here. Never thought of it till we were on the ship for Cape Town. Then I was like a mad



"'Let's shake!'

"'I don't know about that,' she said, drawing herself up."

bear. I can hear the dear old mater now. 'Lawrie, you *must* eat less breakfast. That's what's making you so discontented and grumpy! . . .' Of course it was only a silly kids' affair; but the old people began like that. Mum told me after Dad had gone that she'd loved him since she was eleven. . . . Anyhow, I've never found anyone I liked so well as Frankie. . . . Good luck to you, Xmas Girl . . . 'xtra good was right; kind little beggar coming to succour a great lonely lout . . . God bless you, my dear."

He took off his cap; found it so wet that he wrung the water from it.

"I'm a blighted fool," he grunted, and turned; and there stood a charming lady in a waterproof and a fisherman's hat. He knew her at once.

"Xmas Girl!" he shouted.

"L. L.!" she laughed.

"L for lucky," he cried. "My word, how I've wanted to find you. I'd have written to you if I'd known your address. Let's shake!"

"I don't know about that," she said, drawing herself up. "I put my address on the letter, when I told you that Mum had got over the attack that time."

She gave the same old petulant toss of the head.

"Letter?" he cried. "I never had it, X. G. I'll swear it. I went nearly frantic over not hearing from you."

"Well, I'll shake, then," she consented.

They shook each other's hands up and down, laughing a good deal.

"All waterproof and grin, aren't you?" he said. "My word, you've grown up fine!"

"You won't pacify me with compliments," she declared. "If you'd *really* wanted to write to me, you could have got my address from the Hall in those days."

"I'll explain about that," he said. "It was like this . . ." He explained. "It was only that I was a young fool," he concluded, "not that I wasn't keen on you. So be a sport and forgive me."

"I dare say you're still a fool," she told him, with the same dear old toss of the pert head, "but you're not a boy *now*."

"Meaning I might have tracked you," he said. "I know. I did inquire about the people at the Hall, and found they'd changed. Then—Frankie, I've done badly; come down; just a clerk in the cashier's at Grant and Smith's over at Nesselton. I'd no good luck to share with you. . . . Come for a walk?"

"Take off that wet cap, then, and come under my gamp."

"Let's hold your arm."

"Why should you?"

"Because . . . It'll keep the gamp over both of us, and . . . Frankie, there's never been another girl; not one who mattered. If ever I can make good, and you haven't found someone else . . . Xmas Girl, if I had anything I'd ask you to share it—now; this very moment. . . . Sounds a bit absurd, eh? Why do you look like that? Is there anyone else?"

"No," she said.

"Then . . . Will you wait and see if I have a bit of good luck, because . . . If I'm not in love with you, there's no such thing. I always was, and I've always been, and I am. Will you wait a bit for me, and see if I make good? . . . You're giving me all the umbrella."

"My hat's waterproof. . . . Why did you come here this morning?"

"Just . . . memories. . . ."

"You didn't know I was here? . . . I see you didn't. . . . I'm in bad luck too, L. L. My people left nothing. I'm a governess at the Rectory, and sort of help. Lady helps will do what servants won't, you see!"

"Why did *you* come here, girlie?"

"They're away for Christmas. So I'm free to go out."

"You're dodging! Why did you come *here*?"

"Oh! . . . Just memories.'

"Frankie darling!"

"Oh, Lawrie! . . . It's so ridiculous."

"But you've let me kiss you."

"I know I have! . . ."

"Will you marry me some day?"

"Perhaps I will . . ."

They dropped the umbrella then, and held close and kissed. . . . When they picked up the umbrella, they couldn't find his cap. So they set off to search for it.

"You shan't wear that wet thing," she cried. "There's an old one of the Rector's. I'll say I gave it to a tramp. You do look like one! . . . You huge thing! . . . I can't ask you to the Rectory. Governess-helps mustn't entertain followers. Let's walk to Hammington. There's an inn. We'll share pot-luck. . . . All the luck, good or bad. . . . You remember this, L. L. L hasn't to stand for lonely even if it won't stand for lucky. I *specially* want to share

your luck when it's bad! Don't think I'm just talking. I *mean* it."

"Oh, Xmas Girl!" he choked out. "My wonderful Xmas Girl. . . . No more lonely Christmases for me!"

III.

THE next Christmas morning Lawrence sat in a rickety chair in an ill-furnished garret, with his elbows on the rickety table and his chin on his fists, staring over the remains of an ill-cooked breakfast at the neighbouring chimneys. His face was pale and wild, for he was wondering whether he'd let himself live for another Christmas.

"I said I was done with lonely Christmases," he muttered, "and Frankie didn't even say 'touch wood'; and I've come to the loneliest Christmas of my life. If I hadn't said in the letter to her that I wouldn't end it, I'd go out and buy a pistol. . . . Shops aren't open to-day, though." He laughed hollowly.

This was the letter that he had written a few days before, and it sufficiently explains his position.

DEAR FRANKIE,—

An awful thing has happened. Some money has disappeared, and bonds, and some plans of a new invention, which they say are worth thousands; and I'm accused of taking them. The evidence against me is so overwhelming that, if I didn't know I hadn't done it, I'd believe it myself. Sometimes I think that I must have done it in a second personality. The man I'd trust most has owned that he saw someone he thought was I enter the place. He tells *me* that, when he's on his oath, he'll have to swear that he took the man for me; and he said at first, "It *was* you, Hollis. You'd better own up." Even now I expect he thinks in his heart I'm the chap. Anyhow, there's no hope of anybody else believing otherwise, for they found one of the missing bonds at my digs. I don't know how it got there, I swear that. If I took it, it was when I didn't know myself.

They gave me till the morning to own up or be handed over to the police, and sent the chap I mentioned round to talk to me. He said he'd take my word, but no one else would; and I'd get seven years; and after that I'd be a ruined man; not seven years of my life lost, but all of it.

"The defence is hopeless, Hollis," he said; "hopeless—unless something turns up; perhaps after you've been in prison for years, and have that mark on you for always. If you didn't do it, or even if you can't make restitution, the only way to make a life of it is to get right away. . . . Yes, I know about Miss Travers. She's the sort of girl to believe in you and stick to you, if you face it out; and that's another reason for cutting off and not spoiling her life."

Well, I went. He gave me some money and put me on to getting hold of a motor-bike. It was his, so I wasn't a thief, but they'll say so. He'll have to, to keep clear of it. That's why I won't write his name. I think now I was a fool, and have made ever clearing myself impossible; but I've done it. I'm going to try and get away on a ship, if they don't trace me. At present I'm living in a London slum; over Christmas.

My dear, I wouldn't drag you down. Put me right out of your life. Mine will never be one that you could join. It's got to be lonely. In some other country, in some other name, I shall try to make something of it. I promise you that, and that I won't make away with myself. You'll find a better man. There are plenty. But I swear I am innocent; and I shall never love anybody like I've loved my Xmas Girl, and I don't see how anybody else can care for you so much as I did. God bless you, Frankie darling, and make you forget—

L. L.

"I shall never forget *her*," he told himself, blinking at the chimney-pots. "When I think how she'll have cried over that letter——! I won't kill myself, but I'll go where there's the best chance of being outed. Wish there was a war on. . . . The unfairness of it; the cursed unfairness! I'll never believe in Providence, or anything any more. . . . If they'll give me that stoker's berth on that ship I'll take it; slip out in West Africa or somewhere, and hope the fever will finish me!"

He scowled at the chimney-pots till the kindly, if slatternly, landlady came in to remove the breakfast things.

"Here you sit moping and groaning, Mr. Smith," she said; "a hearty young man like you, and on Christmas Day of all days! It's a gal, I'd lay! . . . Best go for a nice walk and pick up a fresh tart. One's much the same as another, you'll come to find. Meantime cheer up. I've brought last night's paper to give you something better to do than think over your troubles. Best thing you can do is to look in the adverts. for a job."

"I looked in all the papers in the Public Library yesterday," he said. "No use."

"Ah!" said the woman shrewdly. "Them that advertise want characters, eh, and them that don't want characters don't advertise! If it's like that, you'll have to begin low, and work up, my lad. But you look through this paper all the same. You *might* have a bit of Christmas luck."

"Had it and lost it," he muttered; but he took up the paper when the woman had gone and looked down the "situations vacant"; found nothing; turned to the "Personal" column. He scarcely noticed what he read, most of his mind being elsewhere; but presently he seemed to wake up and found himself reading this:

L.L. Meet X. G. St. James's Park, S. side, Whitehall end, 11–1 *Christmas morning.*

He dropped the paper on the floor and his face in his hands.

"There's no good news," he groaned, "or she'd say so. It's just that she wants to share my bad luck. I mustn't go. . . . Unless I could lurk about somewhere just to see her. . . . She'll feel like that too. She's a right to see me if she wishes. I'll have to go and have it out face to face and tell her that I simply *won't* let her wreck her life over me."

Fortunately, it was a damp, rather foggy morning, and they seemed to be in a world by themselves when they met.

"Oh, Lawrie!"

"Oh, Frankie!"

"Kiss me, boy!"

"I didn't mean to . . ." But he did. "I wouldn't touch you if I'd done it. I *didn't*, Frankie!"

"I know, I know! . . . You shouldn't have run away, boy. Everybody thinks you did now."

"I'll go back and take my gruel, if you think I should."

"No, no. If you can escape and make a fresh start, what's the use of going to prison for what you didn't do? You've got to write to me; and as soon as you've found a job I'm coming to you, even if it's only a workman's job. Our life is our life; and mine's nothing without you, boy."

"But, my darling——"

"There's no 'but' at all, Lawrie. My happiness doesn't depend on luck, comfort, ease, position. It depends on *you*. . . . Promise you'll write to me, and send for me as soon as you've anything and it's safe; and say you won't promise it just to pacify me, and write another silly letter afterwards. I can see you're thinking of that."

"Well, I was thinking of it," he owned slowly.

"Did you remember that it would break my heart?"

"Oh, Frankie girl. . . . It will never be safe. They'll watch you."

"I've thought out lots of ways to lose myself," she declared.

"They'll watch for letters to you," he protested.

"You could write to a post office, or a shop where they take in letters, and I'll be Miss Emily Mordaunt; unless I can think of a better way. I've thought it all out, unless you want to get rid of me! I didn't think of that!"

"Frankie, you're the whole old world to me!"

"Then you do as the whole old world tells you. I always said I'd boss you, didn't I? Promise both promises; on your honour as an honest gentleman—*I* know you're that—and—*on the dear love between us, boy!*"

He promised. They walked the Park, went to a cheap restaurant for lunch, walked the Park again or sat there till it was closing, and then walked the Mall for an hour, always holding arms. They settled where he was to write to: the house of her nurse, when she was a child. The nurse was to put a sign on letters to her when one had come from him, and then she would run up to town and call for it. He was only to write three times a year, unless he had special news, and she was only to write to the same extent, to minimise the risk. And she was to lose herself from her friends for a few weeks and then come to him directly he had a decent home to offer her. She had a little money in the Savings Bank to pay a passage.

He said good-bye in a quiet street, some way from the station—they thought he had better not venture in there—and he went back to his lodgings. The landlady laughed when she saw him.

"You went out looking like a convict and come in looking like a king," she said.

"I met the queen!" he told her. "She always did bring me luck at Christmas, and I believe she always will. . . . I—I call her my Xmas Girl, Mrs. Rogers."

"Well, I hope she'll bring you luck next Christmas and many of 'em, my lad," said the woman.

IV.

LUCK seemed further than ever from Lawrence the next Christmas Day and he was further from his Xmas Girl's bringing. He was worse than lonely; at a little West African Coast trading out-station with two elderly companions, who had got upon his nerves—and he on theirs. All three had had fever recently, and were sodden with quinine, and dull and hot and miserable and querulous; and the news had come that the station was to close on 1st January, and there were no other berths for them at present. In the meantime they had proposed to have some sort of Christmas celebration, but now they had given it up. The others were going to drink the day through; and Lawrence, who didn't drink—he was saving up for a home for Frankie some day—said, "I'd drown myself if I hadn't to walk out half a mile to do it," and went after break-

fast and sat under a giant cactus, in a drill suit and nothing under it, and stared out to sea, over a long stretch of muddy shallows and a long line of breakers, down to the creek that ran in to the " warehouse "—which was only a couple of huts.

" Not even a letter from Frankie," he groaned. He had written to her in good time to have an answer at Christmas, and had expected that the launch which came up from headquarters once a fortnight would bring it upon its last trip ; but evidently she had missed the mail, for no letter had arrived.

His last letter had said that it was quite impossible for her to live out there, unless he got a better job at one of the big ports, and he saw no present prospect of that.

Even the missionaries don't marry while they are at stations like this, my dear ; and the missionary ladies are tough and stand more than I'd let you. The life is almost unbearable even for a man. However, I'm putting money by ; £67 altogether, and £47 of it since I came here ; and if I can stick it for the year, when I hope they'll have me at headquarters, I think you'll be able to come out and be my Christmas missus ! I ought to be able to furnish —you'd laugh at our furniture !—by then. The screw's all right if you don't drink, you see. I told my mates why I wouldn't, and they said, " Well, you must be durned fond of that girl ! " I said, " Well, look at her," and showed them your photo. They're good old sorts, whatever's in their back beyonds, and if we do get a bit fed up with one another. Do you know, I don't believe they'd let me touch anything without a row on your account ! And if *you* take to whisky when you come I shall beat you. (N.B. Joke !)

There was a great deal more in the letter, of course, but it doesn't concern the story.

" And now," he told himself, " that hope's gone. Very likely I'll spend most of what I've saved before I get another job, and have to begin again instead of getting promotion. They say trade's bad and everyone's reducing. . . . If I took passage to South Africa, I'd get a decent job there ; but sooner or later somebody would recognise me, and wonder why I'd changed my name ; and I'd end by being connected up with that infernal affair and sent to England for trial. . . . I believe I *would* drown myself if it weren't for Frankie ; or because of her, if I hadn't promised ; good thing for the girlie ; set her free. . . . I believe I shall go off my head and do it sooner or later. . . . Perhaps fever will free her. If I drank like the others . . ."



" He dropped the paper on the floor and his face in his hands."

He got up and walked into the hut ; seized the whisky-bottle.

" Don't do it, boy," one of his mates shouted.

" Look at us ! " cried the other.

" It's Christmas Day," he said. " Don't look at me like that, you blighters. A chap

can't stick more than a certain amount." He poured some whisky into a glass; then some soda-water.

"A merry Christmas to you chaps," he said.

"Ladies first," said his older mate meaningly.

"Wonder what the girlie's thinking of?" said the other man. "Going to drink to *her*?"

"Oh, Heaven!" Lawrence cried. "My Christmas Girl!"

He dashed the glassful on the ground and ran out.

"That girl's the only hope the blighter's got," said one sodden man.

"We'd best put the stuff under lock and key," said the other. "Sort of fancy I'd like to see sonny pull through. . . . Sometimes I half fancy he *didn't* do what he says he didn't."



"Let's go and fetch him in to play cards or something," the first man suggested.

They went out; but they saw "Smith," as Lawrence called himself, hurrying to the creek. The headquarters launch was making for it.

"Poor devil!" said the second man. "He fancies it's brought him that letter he didn't get; and it can't. No other mail in! . . . Directions for us about closing up and telling us to ship some of the stuff now. That's what it'll be."

"I don't work for anybody on Christmas Day," the first man said. "Let's put on clean things to make it clear we're holiday-keeping before we go down to the blighted boat."

They went back into the hut.

Lawrence was at the little wharf when the launch came in.

"Any letters for me?" he shouted.

"One," said the captain. "It's on the seat in the cabin, if you can't wait till we've tied up."

Lawrence rushed into the cabin; and the letter rose from the seat to meet him. It was his Christmas Girl! He reeled and she held him.

"It's all right, boy," she cried. "It's *all right*. You're cleared. The firm paid for my passage out for a Christmas present to you. . . ."

"I feel faint, Frankie," he choked out. "Let's sit down . . . Christmas Girl!"

"Yes. . . . Now you get your breath and listen. . . . It was like this. I met your old head master, and he was so cut up about you that I told him you didn't do it.

He said, 'He'd tell you the lie, my dear'; and I said, 'Lawrence wouldn't tell me a lie on his honour as a gentleman and my lover.' . . . I can't tell you if you don't leave me my mouth, boy! . . . He said, My dear, I caught him cheating at school. *I* know him! You come with me to John Grant.' Mr. Grant pooh-poohed him at first; but at last he promised to put a clever detective on to it. The detective traced some of the bonds to Marley; and he owned up to the whole affair, and that he had planted it on you. . . . Then Mr. Grant said he'd have you back, and do something for you; and he'd cable; and I said you were at this lonely place, and the cable wouldn't go up to you till the next fort-



"He dashed the glassful on the ground."

'I thought of him like that; but he ran away, and stole Marley's motor-cycle to do it!' Then I told him that Marley advised you to go and lent you the cycle; and then he shouted out as if he had gone mad: 'Marley's the thief! . . . I know him. . . . nightly boat. 'I'll pay for a special boat,' he declared. 'Wish I could get the poor chap home to you for Christmas, but I can't.' I said, 'Well—— ?' and looked at him. He said, 'Eh ?' 'He calls me his Christmas Girl,' I said, 'because three times I've taken

good luck to him at Christmas!' . . . 'There's no boat to reach there in time,' Mr. Reeves said; but Mr. Grant 'phoned to a steamship company and paid a fast mail-boat to South Africa to call and land me at Acca, and gave me the money to pay your Company to send the launch here specially with me—but they wouldn't take anything! And—here's your Christmas Girl! . . . Leave me a little breath, Lawrie. . . . He's booked a passage back for each of us."

"But look here——? I thought we'd get married first?"

"Well . . . Mr. Grant said, if we did, we could easily arrange with the steamship company at Acca!"

"And what did you say?"

"Oh! . . . I only laughed. . . . Mind. Someone's coming."

"You needn't cough yourselves hoarse," said Lawrence. "Come in. . . . This is my friend Browning, and this is my friend Masters. Friends of yours too; wouldn't even let me drink their healths on your account. . . . Chaps, this is *my Christmas Girl*!"

I LOVE CHRISTMAS TREES.

I WEEP for Christmas Trees
Laden with toys
Standing in the hot room
With mirth and noise,
Decked with candles
And their bright glare,
Dying for silence
And the cool night air.

I love Christmas Trees
Deep in the wood,
Dressed in the only way
That fir trees should,
Tangled cobwebs
As frail as dreams,
Tied by the magic
Of white moon-beams.

I love Christmas Trees
Out upon the hills
Clothed by the hoar-frost
In stiff white frills,
Standing in silence
Where no sound jars,—
I love Christmas Trees
Underneath the stars.

DOROTHY DICKINSON.

HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH AT HOME

A CHRISTMAS HOMILY ON THE FAMILY LIFE OF TO-DAY

By LADY BUCKMASTER

As the wife of the eminent ex-Lord Chancellor who has done so much to reform the laws of divorce, Lady Buckmaster's views on the relations between the sexes and the attitude of modern youth to its parents are of special interest.

MANY observers of the game of life, as it is played to-day, come to the conclusion that family ties no longer exist and that marriage vows are made only to be broken.

This is undoubtedly an age of revolt against every fetter. Parents may still feel attached to their children, but it is not uncommon for children to be, if not antagonistic, at least indifferent to their parents. I asked a girl not long ago what she thought the most desirable characteristic in a mother. Without hesitation, she replied, "Undoubtedly unobtrusiveness."

There is no doubt that the middle-aged parents of to-day have been harshly treated by fate. In their youth they were dominated and suppressed by their elders; to-day they are dominated and suppressed by their offspring. Now domination of one human being by another is always bad. It is this feature of family life which was responsible for much stifled unhappiness in the past and in the present is largely the cause of the revolt of youth.

M. Haekenschmidt, the famous wrestler, who is now appearing as a sage and philosopher, has made some very pertinent remarks on this topic. I cannot do better than quote them: "The fact that for centuries we have been stopped from creating ourselves, and have been pushed and moulded into the pattern of other men, is the reason for our restless unhappiness. Our salvation is for man to develop his own personality. If we train men to act according to the wishes and opinions of a superior we are dominating man's self-control, and soon his self-confidence and self-responsibility will disappear."

Marriage is too often a failure because men, instead of seeking friendship and companionship in a wife, seek only the satisfaction of a fleeting passion. They are "April when they woo, December when they wed."

Thomas Hardy has given us some words of wisdom on the *camaraderie* of marriage. He says: "This good-fellowship—*camaraderie*—usually occurring through similarity of pursuits, is unfortunately seldom superadded to love between the sexes, because men and women associate, not in their labours, but in their pleasures merely. Where, however, happy circumstances permit its development, the compounded feeling proves itself to be the only love which is as strong as death—that love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown, beside which the passion usually called by the name is evanescent as steam."

Women who begin their wedded life with the highest ideals are often completely disillusioned, and not unnaturally seek to free themselves from an intolerable bondage.

The Creator who put us into this beautiful world, and bade us be glad and rejoice, cannot wish any of His creatures to submit to a martyrdom which achieves nothing. But marriage which is a true union of spirit and of purpose and a faithful partnership in weal and woe should be the source and fountain of the most sublime felicity that life

can offer. If parenthood be added, the parenthood of happy, healthy children, then indeed life's cup of blessing is filled to the brim.

Parents must not expect too much of their children, nor seek to mould them entirely after their own plans. We must realise that, as a rule, children give more joy to their elders than they get from them, and that they see no particular reason for gratitude. But the parents who are elastic, who move with the times, who open their eyes to the children's point of view, who share their interests and encourage them to develop their own tastes and personalities, such parents are generally amply rewarded.

Two girls of to-day of different families and even of different nationalities have told me that they want no friend outside the home, each having such an incomparable mother. Usually it is only when the children themselves become parents that it dawns on them how much they owe to their mothers. Blessed are they who forget not her to whom they owe a debt of gratitude they can never repay. Blessed are they whose pride it is to guide the failing footsteps of her who guided their steps in infancy.

The old ideas of family life, involving, as they too often did, the supremacy of the male element and the subordination, sacrifice and even servitude of the female, these old ideas which are the contradiction of our modern views of justice and equality, no one can regret that they should pass and give place to a wider, nobler, and juster scheme of the home.

The present outlook does not really call for the disruption of family ties, but rather for their readjustment; for when all is said and done a happy united family is the best gift of heaven and the most precious possession of man, and as long as language shall last no other word will ever be so dear to us as the magical and alluring word Home.



[*F. A. Swaine.*

LADY BUCKMASTER.

Reminiscences of Lewis Carroll

by Ethel M. Arnold



At this season of the year, when so many "uncles" and "aunts" will be thinking of *Alice in Wonderland* as a possible present for some young friend, this article should be of special interest. Miss Arnold and her sister "Judy" (afterwards Mrs. Leonard Huxley, mother of Professor Julian Huxley, the biologist, and of Mr. Aldous Huxley, the novelist) were among Lewis Carroll's most intimate child-friends. Their eldest sister, Mrs. Humphry Ward, being already grown-up at the time of the first meeting recorded in these notes, was of course never a child-friend of his, though a friend of later years. The original "Alice," though also a good deal older than the writer of these notes, was well known to the Arnold family.

TO recall my first meeting with the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, or—as he was familiarly known to the world at large—"Lewis Carroll," I must, I regret to say, go back fifty-nine years. But though I was but a chubby child of five, through one of those odd quirks of memory by which certain scenes or episodes of one's childhood are indelibly etched upon one's brain, I remember every detail of that meeting as if it were yesterday.

It was a typical Oxford afternoon in late autumn—damp, foggy, cheerless; the grey towers of the distant Colleges across the "Parks," as they are called (not because they are more than one, but because Cromwell stationed his parks of artillery on the ground afterwards made into one of the loveliest open spaces in the world), looked greyer than usual in the dim autumnal light. A number of little girls, bursting with youthful spirits, and all agog for mischief, danced along one of the paths, a staid governess bringing up the rear. Presently one of their number spied a tall black clerical figure in the distance, swinging along towards the little group with a characteristic briskness, almost jerkiness, of step. —"Here comes Mr. Dodgson," she cried. "Let's make a barrier across the path so that he can't pass." No sooner said than done—the children joined hands and formed a line across the path; the clerical figure, appreciating the situation, advanced at the double and charged the line with his umbrella. The line broke in confusion, and the next moment four of the little band were clinging to such portions of the black-coated figure as they could seize upon. Two little people, however, hung back, being seized with shyness and a sudden consciousness of their audacity, a sudden awe of this tall, dignified gentleman in black broadcloth and white tie. But in a moment he had shaken off the clinging, laughing children, and before the two little strangers had time to realise what had happened, they found themselves trotting along on either side of him, a hand of each firmly clasped in the strong, kind hands of Lewis Carroll, and chattering away as if they had known him all their lives. Thus began a lifelong friendship between

Lewis Carroll and the younger of those two little girls, myself.

"Lewis Carroll," as he preferred to be known to the world at large, or the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, as he was known to his friends, was born at Danesbury in Lancashire, of which parish his father was Vicar, on January 27th, 1832. There is nothing much to record of his boyhood or early manhood. There was little in them to single him out from the hosts of English boys and young men who come from clerical homes and pass through the ordinary routine of public school and University. He showed marked mathematical ability while at Oxford, and though only taking a Third in Greats, he took a First in the final School of Mathematics. This led to a mathematical studentship and lectureship at Christ Church, and this, in turn, led to his taking deacon's Orders in 1861—for in those days Orders were an essential qualification for most of the teaching posts in the University. He never took priest's Orders, for, owing to a slight, but very decided, stammer, he felt himself cut off from parochial work, and for the academic career he had embarked upon, deacon's Orders were sufficient.



JULIA AND ETHEL ARNOLD, AT THE AGES OF NINE AND SEVEN.

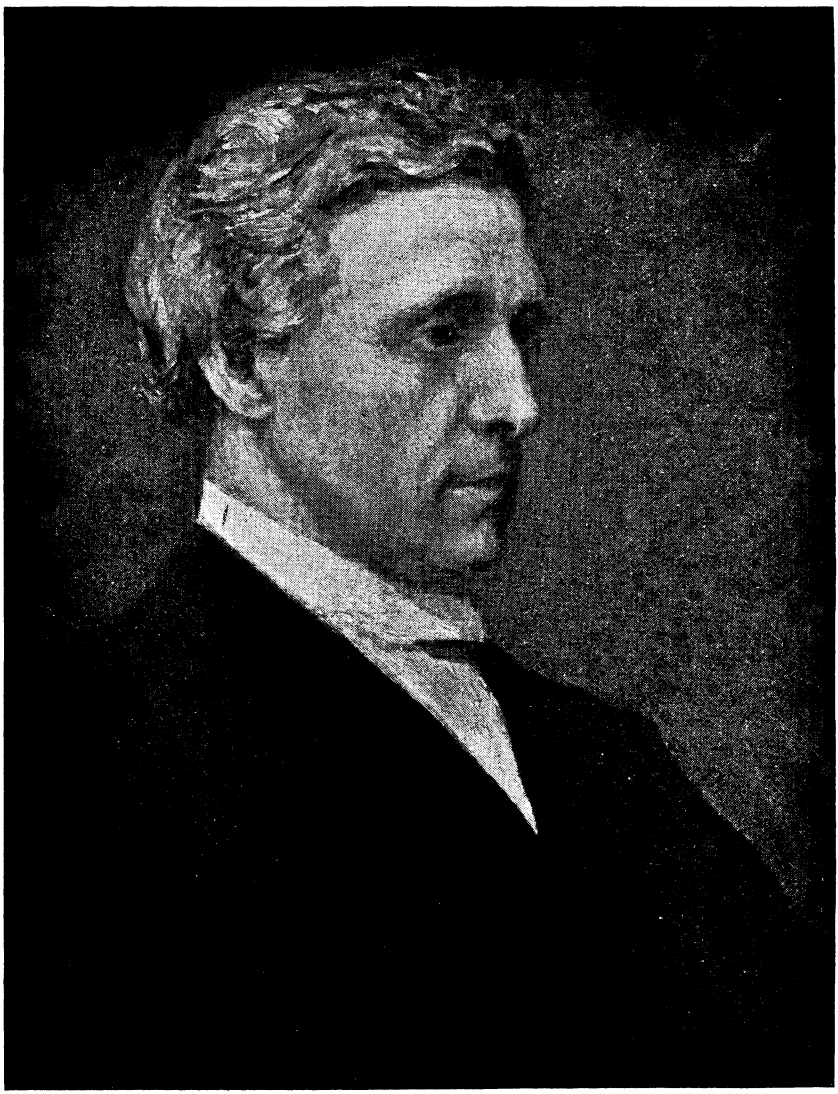


ETHEL ARNOLD, IN THE BRIDESMAID'S DRESS SHE WORE AT THE WEDDING OF HER SISTER MARY TO HUMPHRY WARD.

When I first met him in the year 1870 he had already reached the comfortable goal of his career; that is to say, he was what is called a Senior Student of Christ Church and Mathematical Lecturer to the College—a combination of posts which brought him in a comfortable income and gave him lifelong possession of what was perhaps the most spacious and beautiful suite of College rooms to be found in Oxford.

And what an El Dorado of delights those rooms were to his innumerable child-friends! The large sitting-room was lined with well-filled bookshelves, under which ran a row of cupboards all round the four walls. Oh, those cupboards! What wondrous treasures they contained for the delectation of youth! Mechanical bears, dancing-dolls, toys and puzzles of every description came from them in endless profusion! Even after I was grown up I never paid a visit to his rooms without finding my eyes stealing to those cupboards, experiencing over again the thrill of delicious anticipation as the doors of one of them swung open.

Lewis Carroll was one of the first of the immense family of amateur photographers to take up photography as a hobby—and photography in those days was a very different thing from what it is now. It was no case then of " Press the button and we do the rest " ; you had to do everything yourself, from the coating of your own plates with the old wet silver emulsion to the development and printing. It was no joke photographing or being photographed in those days ; and for a nervous child, dressed up as a Heathen Chinee, a beggar-child, or a fisher-maiden, to keep still for forty-five seconds at a time was no mean ordeal. I was an extremely bad subject, I am sorry to say, and Mr. Dodgson in consequence only took me when he was afraid my feelings would be hurt by his constant preference for my sister as a sitter. She was, in fact, one of his very best child-subjects, and some of the photographs we still have of her are really beautiful specimens of early photography. Many of the famous men



LEWIS CARROLL.

The Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson.

Reproduced from the portrait by Herkomer in the Hall of Christ Church, Oxford, by permission of the Governing Body of the House.

and women of the day posed before Lewis Carroll's camera in the studio he erected on the Christ Church leads; but, with the whimsical contrariness which was characteristic of him, as soon as the wet plate with all its attendant difficulties and messiness went out, and the clean, convenient dry plate came in—as soon, that is, as photography became easy—he abandoned it, and not one photograph did he ever take by the new and infinitely simplified process. But I never catch a whiff of the potent odour of collodion nowadays without instantly being transported on the magic wings of memory to Lewis Carroll's darkroom, where, shrunk to childhood's proportions, I see myself watching, open-mouthed, the mysterious process of coating the plate, or, standing on a box drawn out from under the sink to assist my small dimensions, watching the still more mysterious process of development. And then the stories—the never-ending, never-failing stories he told in answer to our never-ending, never-failing demands! He was indeed a bringer of delight in those dim, far-off days, and I look back upon the hours spent in his dear and much-loved company as oases of brightness in a somewhat grey and melancholy childhood.

Looking through bundles of old letters, yellowed by the passing of years, the other day, I came upon this delicious little note, written in 1874 to my sister Julia and myself, aged respectively eleven and nine:

"What remarkably wicked children you are! I don't think you would find in all history, even if you go back to the times of Nero and Heliogabalus, any instance of children so heartless and so entirely reckless about returning story-books. Now I think of it, neither Nero nor Heliogabalus ever failed to return any story-book they borrowed. That is certain, because they never borrowed any, and that again is certain because there were none printed in those days.

"Affectionately yours,
"C. L. D."

Another letter, written years later, when I was eighteen and my sister twenty, which refers to a visit paid to his rooms by my sister and myself and Miss Marion Terry—who, as well as her sisters Kate and Ellen, had been a friend of Lewis Carroll's from childhood—I cannot resist quoting. He introduced me to Marion Terry when I was seventeen, and I promptly formed a girlish adoration for her—a fact to which, as you will see, he alludes in the letter:

"My dear Ethel,

"To save the few surviving fragments of our friendship (blighted as it is by the transference of *all* your capabilities of affection to one single individual in London) from drifting away into oblivion, I will, if Thursday afternoon be fine, be at our usual rendezvous at 3½, and if you are there we will take a walk and then come round here and partake of the cup that does not inebriate, and you shall tell me your experiences in the society of one who was once *my* friend.

"You will be kind enough to tell Judy (with my love, which I send *most* reluctantly) that I *may* forgive, but cannot forget, her utterly heartless behaviour in my rooms yesterday. You were not present, and I will not pain your sensitive nature by describing it.. But I will be even with her some day. Some sultry afternoon, when she is here, half fainting with thirst, I will produce a bottle of delicious cool lemonade. This I will uncork, and pour it foaming into a large tumbler, and then, after putting the tumbler well within her reach, *she shall have the satisfaction of seeing me drink it myself*—not a drop of it shall reach *her* lips!

"However, it *was* very nice of you to bring my dear old friend to see me, and when she had vanished from my gaze what had I but mathematical considerations to console me? 'She may be limited and superficial,' I said to myself. 'She may even be without depth. But she is at least equilateral and equiangular—in one word, what is she but a Poly-gon?'"![1]

I enjoyed the proud distinction of being one of the very few of his child-friends with whom he remained on terms of close friendship after having attained years of discretion. In fact, I believe I was almost the only one of his Oxford child-friends who could claim that distinction. He always used to say that when the time came for him to take off his hat when he met one of his quondam child-friends in the Oxford streets it was time for the friendship to cease. Even *our* friendship was threatened with disruption when I had reached the age of twenty—a situation brought about through the agency of a much-loved Dachshund of mine, the gift of Professor Max Müller. (Oddly enough, both Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll detested dogs, a trait I frankly confess I have always found it difficult to reconcile with the rest of their characters.) My Dachshund, with that unfailing intuition as to their friends and enemies which may almost be said to constitute a sixth sense in the canine race, made, I regret to say, an unprovoked attack upon Mr. Dodgson's legs upon the occasion of an afternoon call upon my mother. Nothing would induce him to enter the house after this outrage, though no real injury had been inflicted.

[1] Miss Marion Terry was called Polly by her family and old family friends.

Next day came a long letter containing an elaborate diagram of the rent which had been made in his left trouser-leg by Bergmann's teeth, and announcing his determination never again to cross our threshold until the dog had been destroyed. Needless to say, Bergmann was not sacrificed even on the altar of so old and valued a friendship, but Mr. Dodgson stuck to his resolution, and ever after that I always had to meet him at a particular spot inside the Park gates when he wished to take me for one of our regular walks, which ended up in his rooms for tea and buttered toast.

Two more letters belonging to the adult period of my friendship with Lewis Carroll are worth quoting, not only for their touches of humour but for the light they throw upon certain unexpected sides to his, in some ways, curiously complex personality. The first is dated Christ Church, May 22nd, 1883, the year I left the Oxford High School. I give it in full, since it contains one or two allusions which call for explanation and comment.

"Now, my dear Ethel, I have a *really* complicated problem to put before you. What you have had in the High School is nothing to it! Here are the data— On Saturday morning (hour unsettled) I go up to Town, and on Saturday evening (hour unsettled) I return. And in the interim I go (of course with a friend—but identity unsettled) to see the *Danischeffs* (spelling unsettled). Now the problem is—who will come with me? Here are my ideas. If your Mother is well enough for such an expedition and would like to come, it would give me great pleasure to treat her to it—and you would probably be glad that she should see for herself what manner of being the Miss Marion Terry is for whom you have formed such an attachment. Quite possibly, when she has seen her, she may be inclined to think that she *is* rather nice after all!—But suppose Mrs. Arnold, for any cause, declines—what next? Well, I think Judy ought to have the next chance; you see, I have taken both Lucy and you to things—but her never. I



JULIA ARNOLD, AFTERWARDS MRS. LEONARD HUXLEY.

She is dressed as a "Heathen Chinee" to be photographed by Lewis Carroll. Her age at the time was nine.

don't know, by the way, what HE [1] would say to it! If she thinks HE wouldn't like it, perhaps SHE had better not come!

"If *she* fails, then I think *you* should have the next chance, because I am hoping to take Lucy to Guildford before long—and if once we get *there*, we are sure to go larking about among the theatres!

"If *you* fail, Lucy remains as the last surviving possibility—and if *she* fails too, then please let me know with all speed that I may secure another companion.[2]

"Love to your sisters,

"Yours always affectionately,

"C. L. DODGSON.

"(The long tail to the 'Y' is to emphasise the question '*Y* should I be affectionate?')"

The allusion to the prospective taking of my sister Lucy to Guildford referred to a projected visit to his six unmarried sisters, who lived together in a charming old house in Guildford called "The Chestnuts." In stating their number to have been six I am entirely trusting to memory and asserting what for many long years I have believed to be true. But I must confess to having been somewhat shaken in this long-cherished belief on meeting recently an old Oxford friend and contemporary—also a child-friend of Lewis Carroll—who was quite positive that there were only *three* Miss Dodgsons when *she* stayed at "The Chestnuts"; to which I could only repeat my assured conviction that when *I* stayed there, there were *six*! It is, of course, possible that the state of extreme nervousness to which these rather alarming, austere, devoutly Evangelical and learned ladies (one of them, Miss Henrietta, was, if I remember rightly, an advanced mathematician) reduced me when, as a rather shy girl of eighteen or nineteen, I paid my only visit to their hospitable and charming home, caused me to see double, and to increase their number from three to six, as I looked back in memory upon that visit. I cannot now be certain; I can only repeat my strong impression that there were *six* Miss Dodgsons at "The Chestnuts" when I stayed there, and leave it at that! On the occasion of that visit Mr. Dodgson read family prayers before breakfast each morning and also the Lessons at the Morning Service at the neighbouring church, at which his sisters were regular attendants, and in the churchyard of which he, who brought the priceless gift of common laughter to the civilised world, now sleeps his last most quiet sleep.

The sentence in which he speaks of "larking about among the theatres," taken in conjunction with his allusion to his sisters' home at Guildford, brings us up against what was perhaps one of the most curious combinations of what was in some ways an oddly self-contradictory and paradoxical character. What one may call the basic *paste*, both hereditary and individual, of which his personality was composed was a rigid Evangelicalism. His sense of humour, exquisite as it was, failed absolutely when any allusion to the Bible, however innocuous, was involved. The patriarchs, the prophets, major and minor, were as sacrosanct in his eyes as any of the great figures of the New Testament; and a disrespectful allusion to Noah or even to Nebuchadnezzar would have shocked and displeased him quite as much as any implied belittlement of St. Paul. Stories of children which even remotely hinged upon Biblical episodes or characters, or even upon any of the hymns in "Hymns Ancient and Modern," were received always with the severest rebuke to their narrators, and I shall never forget the snub administered to one unfortunate acquaintance unaware of this characteristic of his, who ventured to tell him the familiar story of little Miss Bellairs and her orisons! Taken by itself, this stern Evangelical rigidity of attitude in regard to the Bible and towards any story which, in his opinion, treated religious matters with levity, would not have been in any way unexpected or remarkable in a man of his heredity and upbringing. But what did strike the student of psychology as curious, and to a certain extent as incongruous, was that, side by side with this narrowness of outlook in one direction, was to be found a certain strain of what can only be described as Bohemianism, which showed itself in his love of the theatre, in his enjoyment and pride in the friendship of distinguished theatrical artists such as the Terry sisters, and more particularly perhaps in his love of child actresses. The latter trait showed itself first in the delight he took in dressing up his little girl friends in all sorts of fancy dresses (of which he kept an almost inexhaustible stock in the great cupboards to be found in his spacious Christ Church rooms) for the purposes of photography, and found its full satisfaction and fulfilment in the various dramatic versions of *Alice in Wonderland* which to his

[1] The HE in question was Mr. Leonard Huxley, elder son of Professor Huxley, to whom my sister Julia (or more familiarly "Judy") had recently become engaged.

[2] I was the one finally selected for this pleasant expedition.

great delight were produced upon the London stage.

The next and last letter which I reproduce is as follows:

"CHRIST CHURCH.
"*May* 12/84.

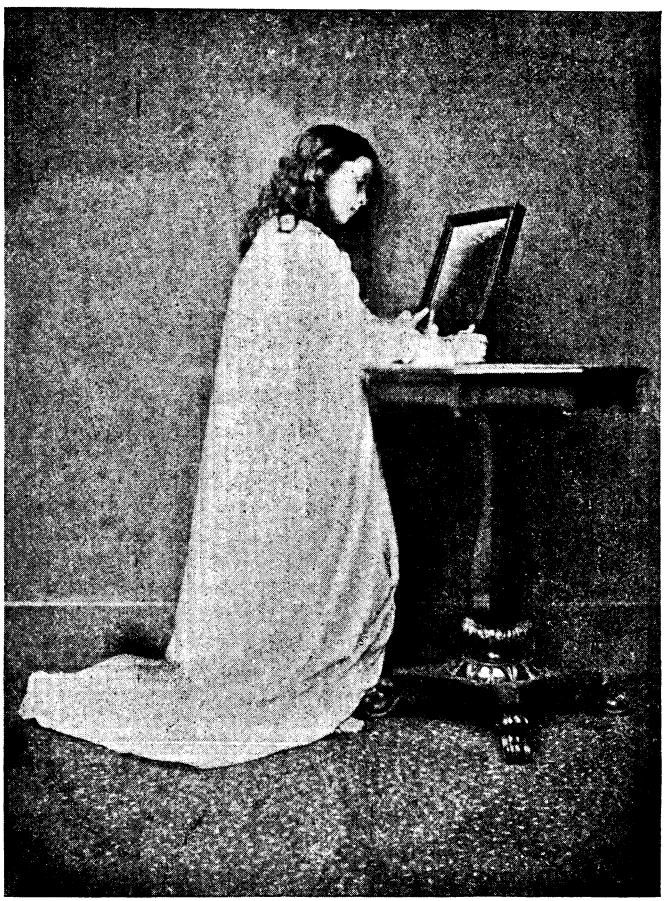
"DEAR ETHEL,—

"Are you up to about 6 miles (altogether) of walking? If so, I should much like to have your society in going to Hampton Poyle to call on an old 'child-friend,' Mrs. Kidston that is, Mona Paton (daughter of Sir Noel Paton) that was. The train to Woodstock Road goes at 3, and I would meet you at ¼ to 3, punctually, on the shady side of Beaumont St. We should reach W. Road at 3.12, and (after a mile's walking) H. Poyle about 3½. We might stay about ½ an hour and we must then walk home (about 5 m.), as there is no train handy. We ought to be home about 6—I would go almost any day that suited you but the more choice of days you can give me the better.

"Ever affectionately yours,
"C. L. DODGSON.

"There is a baby boy there to be admired—about two years old I think, and in this matter you will be of *incalculable* service to me, and relieve me of all responsibility as to saying the proper thing when animals of that kind are offered for inspection."

The letter, apart from its characteristic touch of fun, is interesting as showing the age at which his love for children began—and *ended*! With regard to the proposal contained in the letter (although after the lapse of 45 years I cannot be absolutely certain on the point), I think I may say without fear of inaccuracy that I did *not* join him on that particular expedition, "6 miles (altogether) of walking" being almost as much beyond my powers or inclination then as now!



"LITTLE VANITY."

Ethel Arnold at the age of seven. The name—a most unfair "reflection"—was given to the picture by Lewis Carroll.

But to turn from personal reminiscences to facts of more general interest in connection with the origin of *Alice in Wonderland*, his mode of writing, etc.

On July 4th, 1862, we find this ever-memorable entry in his diary, which he kept with the same methodical care he bestowed upon everything he did.

"Made an expedition up the river to Godstow with the 3 Liddells; we had tea on the bank there and did not reach Christ Church till half past 8."

On the opposite page he added, somewhat later:

"On which occasion, I told them the fairy-tale of 'Alice's Adventures Underground,' which I undertook to write out for Alice."

the same whimsical humour as marked the text, and anyone who compares these original drawings in the original text—which was reproduced in facsimile many years later—will see how many suggestions Tenniel obtained from them for his own illustrations to the story in the enlarged form it ultimately assumed for publication. I remember meeting Mr. Dodgson in the street in Oxford one morning, just after the reproduction of this facsimile had been decided upon, and the naïve vanity with which he said, "Well, you see it seemed to me that



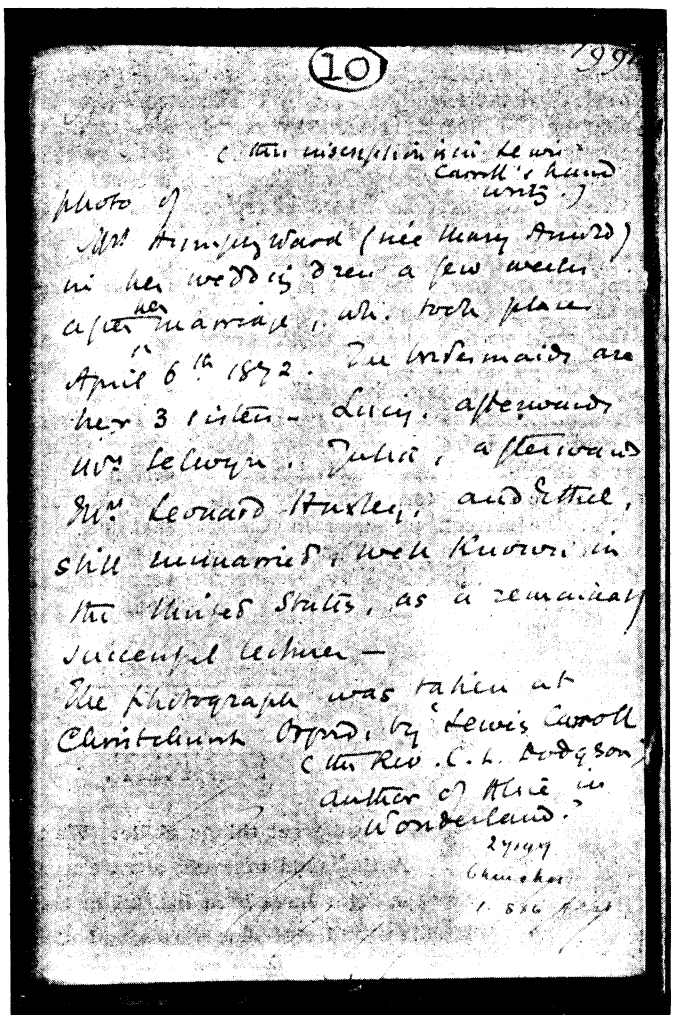
MRS. HUMPHRY WARD (MARY ARNOLD) IN HER WEDDING DRESS.
Her three sisters, Lucy, Julia and Ethel, acted as bridesmaids. A photograph taken by Lewis Carroll.

Alice Liddell, daughter of the Honourable and Very Reverend Henry George Liddell, D.D., Dean of Christ Church, was, in fact, the original "Alice," to whom and her sisters the tale was first told, and for whom the book was originally written. I have had the precious original in my hand many a time—a slender, leather-bound notebook in which Lewis Carroll had printed the story in a clear, neat print, and adorned with his own inimitable illustrations. It was a life-long regret with him that he could not draw, and the illustrations are certainly remarkable for their anatomy, or, rather, lack of it. But at the same time they are full of the public might like to see the original form of a book of which over 70,000 copies have been sold in England alone"; and then he went on to tell me of the precautions that the publishers had had to take against robbery of the priceless little notebook—of how a detective had been engaged to sit in the room all the time the pages were being photographed for reproduction, etc. etc., and all the time his face beamed with the pleasure the scheme had given him. He was indeed a curious mixture of harmless vanity and an almost morbid shrinking from publicity. Nothing annoyed him so much as any revelation of the identity between

Lewis Carroll and the Reverend C. L. Dodgson, Senior Student of Christ Church, and he used often to chuckle at the thought of the numerous autographs, presumably his but which he had persuaded his fellow-College dons to write for him, which were included in the albums of autograph-hunters all over the world. Alice Liddell, afterwards Mrs. Reginald Hargreaves, has put on record her recollections of the story's inception.

"Most of Mr. Dodgson's stories," she writes, "were told to us on river expeditions to Nuneham or Godstow, near Oxford. I believe the beginning of Alice was told one afternoon when the sun was so burning that we had landed in the meadows up the river. Here from all 3 came the old petition, 'Tell us a story,' and so began the ever-delightful tale. Sometimes, to tease us—and perhaps being really tired—Mr. Dodgson would stop suddenly and say, 'And that's all till next time.' 'Oh, but it *is* next time!' would be the exclamation from all three—and after some persuasion the story would start afresh. Another day, perhaps, the story would begin in the boat, and Mr. Dodgson, in the middle of telling a thrilling adventure, would pretend to go fast asleep, to our great dismay."

"Alice's Adventures Underground" was the original name of the story; later it became "Alice's Hour in Elfland"; it was not until June 18th, 1864, that he finally decided to call it "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." When he promised to write out "Alice" for Mrs. Liddell he had no idea of publication, and it is to his old friend George McDonald, the well-known poet and novelist, himself author of some of the most enchanting children's stories in the English language, that we owe the "Alice" we know and love so well. He urged him to send it to Messrs. Macmillan, who immediately agreed to publish it, and in July, 1865, it first saw the light of day. It was translated into almost every European language and he gave me a copy of all the translations —French, German, Italian, Spanish, etc.; but, alas, out of all those much-treasured volumes—to say nothing of the English versions and of all the copies of his later books which he gave me—I now possess only the German, Italian and French translations —all the other precious volumes are reposing on the bookshelves of numerous immoral and soulless book-borrowers, whose consciences, I hope, may some day awake and prick them!



INSCRIPTION, IN MRS. WARD'S HANDWRITING, ON BACK OF THE PHOTOGRAPH (SEE PAGE OPPOSITE), TAKEN BY LEWIS CARROLL, OF MRS. HUMPHRY WARD AND HER BRIDESMAIDS.

His later books were written on a different

plan altogether from the first "Alice." He used always to keep a pencil and piece of paper by his bedside, for he found that his most absurd ideas generally came to him on the borderland of dreams, and, as soon as they had assumed form and shape, he jotted them down. In this way most of the verses scattered through "Alice Through the Looking-Glass" and "Sylvia and Bruno" were written, and the story *afterwards* was woven round the poem. He was often asked what he really meant by "The Hunting of the Snark," which by many people was held to contain a profound philosophical thesis, by others a political allegory, etc. To all such questions he would reply, "I meant *nothing at all.* I happened one day to be walking along the sands at Eastbourne, and the line came into my head: 'For the Snark *was* a boojum, you see'—and the whole poem arose out of that one totally meaningless line!"

And now it is time to bring these few brief reminiscences of a unique personality to an end, and I feel I cannot say farewell to a much-loved and deeply honoured friend in more fitting terms than by quoting from the sermon preached in Christ Church Cathedral on the Sunday after his death in 1898, by the Very Reverend Dean Paget:

"We may differ, according to our difference of taste or temperament, in appraising Charles Dodgson's genius, but that that great gift was his—that his best work ranks with the very best of its kind—has been owned with a recognition too wide and spontaneous to leave room for doubt. The brilliant, venturesome imagination defying forecast with ever-fresh surprise; the sense of humour in its finest and most naïve form; the power to touch with lightest hand the undercurrent of pathos in the midst of fun; the audacity of creative fancy and the delicacy of insight—these are rare gifts, and surely they were his. Yes, but it was his simplicity of mind and heart that raised them all, not only in his work, but in his life, in all his ways, in the man as we knew him, to something higher than any mere enumeration of them tells: that almost curious simplicity, at times, that real and touching child-likeness that marked him in all fields of thought, appearing in his love of children and in their love for him, in his dread of giving pain to any living creature, in a certain disproportion now and then of the view he took of things—yes, and also in that deepest life, where the pure in heart and those who become as little children see the very truth, and walk in the fear and love of God."

SONNET.

THE first great things abide. We superimpose
A thousand marvels of rare magnitude,
For the Ages have been fruitful in their brood:
Wonders and ripe discoveries and the shows
Of knowledge; yet we live still, birth to close,
On the same, ancient, immemorial food
As yielded the first man his hardihood
And comely strength, the grain that quietly grows.

What have we found for all our weft of powers,
Our search into the being of sap and seed,
Save that we live, and love awhile, and die?
Alas, we fill too full the untarrying hours
With intricate heresies of growth and speed;
Move upward, yes; but, mounting, simplify.

WALLACE B. NICHOLS.



"'Were you searching for buried treasure *all* the time?'"

A SCRAP OF PAPER

By J. D. BERESFORD

ILLUSTRATED BY KENNETH INNS

WHEN Frank Oliver came home in the spring of 1919 after three years in Salonika, he found changes in the village. His father had died a few days after the Armistice; there was a new Rector; the price of everything was double what it had been before the War; and it seemed that quite half the young men he had known were either crippled or dead.

His father had been the Council schoolmaster, and after his wife had died, when Frank was seven years old, had kept both himself and his son apart from the life of what he regarded as his social inferiors. Some of his neighbours had accepted the distinction; others had sneered and said that the schoolmaster was "stuck-up" and "too big for his boots." Even after Frank, at fifteen, had refused to become a pupil-teacher and follow in his father's footsteps, preferring to be apprenticed to the trade of carpenter and wheelwright, he had not mixed freely with the young men of his age. He had been better educated than they had, and a vein of seriousness they lacked kept him out of what they called their "larks." Horse-play, running after young women and getting tipsy on market-days did not appeal to Frank.

What he loved was making things. He had a strain of the artist in him, an eye for

beauty in the lines of the material in which he worked. When he had "joined up" at the age of twenty-three, four and a half years ago, he had had a plan in his mind for the design and construction of simple furniture—good, honest, clean stuff, frankly built for its own special purpose. He had known that there was a market for it.

And now he might be able to put that plan into action. His father had always been a queer man, a born muddler who worried himself into a panic about trifles; and there had been no true companionship possible between him and his practical, hard-working son, nor any confidences. But once or twice he had referred, Frank remembered, to a "nest-egg," and if that were not a fantasy of the old man's bewildered brain, there might be enough to give him a start.

Mr. Neale, the senior partner of the firm of lawyers in Wilford, received Frank the next morning with the cheeriest welcome that had yet been offered to him, called him "Mr. Frank," was apparently keenly interested in his experiences, and had, it seemed, plenty of time to put at his disposal. It was quite ten minutes before they got down to business.

"About your father's estate, yes," Mr. Neale said then, paraphrasing the rather blunt question that had been put to him. "Well, the will, a remarkably brief one, was all in order; and you, Mr. Frank, are the sole and unrestricted legatee. Everything of which your father died possessed comes to you, in fact; the freehold of the cottage and garden—mortgaged, I'm sorry to say—and what we call his personal estate, the—er—furniture of the cottage, and, well, there should have been, so far as I can make out, quite a tidy sum in investments or cash—yes, quite a tidy sum—between two and three thousand pounds in fact. . . ."

Mr. Neale broke off there, stared down at the papers in front of him and thoughtfully scratched his cheek.

"Should have been, you say?" Frank prompted him.

"Should have been," Mr. Neale repeated, pursed his lower lip with a very grave expression, stared hard at Frank over the top of his glasses, and finally added, "If it had not disappeared."

Frank shook his head. "I don't get you," he said. "How disappeared?"

"At the beginning of the War," Mr. Neale began deliberately, "your father had certain small packets of industrial investments. They lost value, of course, in the autumn of 1914; but though one or two continued to decline, certain of the others connected with steel firms more than made up the balance. So far so good, eh? Well, well, in the spring of 1916 it seems that your father sold all his stock through the bank—you'd better drop in and see the manager, this morning, by the way—and for a month or so all his money was either on deposit or current account. Yes. Then he began to draw it out in substantial sums, telling Mr. Perks—the new manager of the London and County, you wouldn't remember him—poor Mr. Williams was killed on the Somme—er—telling Mr. Perks that he was buying War Certificates. Yes. That's all apparently reasonable, eh? Quite so. But our trouble is that we have not been able to trace the purchase of any War Certificates. In fact, no such Certificates were ever bought in your father's name; and the money"—Mr. Neale suddenly opened his eyes very wide and made a large gesture with hands—"the money, in short, my dear Mr. Frank, seems to have disappeared."

"But I can't see how . . ." Frank began.

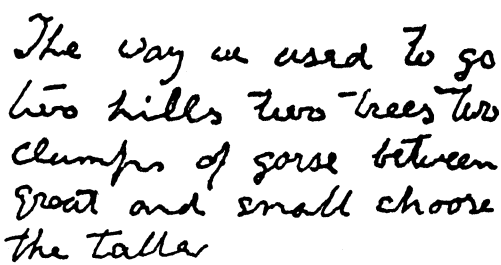
Mr. Neale shrugged his shoulders, scratched his cheek again and then sighed heavily. "The fact is, I'm afraid," he confessed after a short pause, "that your father was a little queer in the head, the last two years of his life. And it seems, from what I can make out, that there was some woman who kept house for him for a time, and who left the village a month or two before his death—a Mrs. Carter. Not a native of these parts. She came, in fact, from the East Coast, after the Lowestoft raid. And, well, old men do odd things and I've wondered if it were just possible that your father had been under her influence in some way and she had—I don't know if you find the theory a trifle strained?—persuaded him into selling his stock and giving her the money?"

"I don't know," Frank said, getting to his feet. He had no talent for the unravelling of mysteries. His gifts all lay in the direction of constructing, of making and putting together. Dissection, analysis, bothered him.

"Wait one minute, Mr. Frank," Mr. Neale hastily interposed. "There's one more thing that may throw a little light on the matter, a very small letter addressed to you in a sealed envelope, endorsed 'to be opened only by my son Frank.' It may be, perhaps . . ." He fidgeted among his papers for a moment, and then produced a

small and rather dirty envelope, closed with a clumsy, red seal.

Frank opened it with a touch of impatience. It contained nothing but a small scrap of ruled paper, torn apparently from an old exercise book, and bearing five lines of writing.



For a few seconds he puzzled over that. Then, "It's my father's writing," he said. "But what it means, I don't know. 'The way we used to go, two hills, two trees, two clumps of gorse, between great and small choose the taller.' Was he mad, Mr. Neale?"

"Queer, decidedly queer," was the reply.

"He was always that," Frank commented.

"He got worse towards the end, decidedly worse," Mr. Neale said, holding out his hand for the scrap of paper. But all he could do when he had read it, turned it over and peered into the envelope, to see if anything had been left behind, was to shake his head gravely, purse his underlip, and pass the enigmatical message back to Frank.

Just then the clerk came to announce that Sir Hector Groves, the local magnate, had called without an appointment but he'd be glad if Mr. Neale could spare him ten minutes; whereat Mr. Neale bounced out of his chair, shook Frank warmly by the hand, assured him that he must come again soon to talk things over and showed him out by the side door.

When he found himself in the street, Frank hesitated as to whether or no he should go and see the new bank manager. But what was the good? he asked himself. He could learn nothing fresh there. He glanced again at that foolish scrap of paper that he had crushed up in his left hand, then thrust it impatiently into his jacket pocket. No, he decided, he would worry his head no further about that. Undoubtedly his father had been mad. What he had to do was to get to work again as soon as possible. He was young, strong, in splendid physical health, and a highly skilled workman. What he had to do was to get a job; work hard and live carefully for a few years until he could scrape together enough to start that furniture-making of his. He might begin in a small way in his odd time. He'd go now at once to the offices of the building contractors, Harris and Son, just outside the town. They would probably give him a foreman's job at four pounds a week to start with.

And Harris and Son were glad to get him at five pounds a week. There was a big boom coming in the building trade. England was short of houses after the War. And of men.

II.

FRANK might have stayed at Harris's for years, until such a time, in fact, as he had saved enough money to buy the plant that would be necessary for his individualistic experiment in the making of modern furniture, on the most modest scale. A thousand pounds, he had reckoned, would start him fairly comfortably. And in that case the enigmatic message bequeathed to him by his father would have remained crumpled up in the pocket of his jacket. For Frank had no gift for enigmas himself, and was not tempted to display this one to any of his acquaintances. As he saw it, that message was but additional proof of his father's insanity at the end of his life, of which he had confirmation from other sources. "He was never quite right in the head from the time you left; and he kept getting worse and worse," was a representative report.

It was Miss Nora Dalgleish, the daughter of the new Rector, who made him change his mind. Frank fell hopelessly in love with her at first sight. He had never been in love before. His was a temperament that could not love without worship, and the only young women whom he had known at all intimately had not inspired adoration. They had shown him all too clearly how ready they were to be made love to by so good-looking and sturdy a young man as himself, and this very willingness had repulsed him.

Nora Dalgleish was, as he saw it, hopelessly far above him. Her name even had an aristocratic ring about it; a high-sounding, beautiful name, that made him ashamed of his own simple one; and her voice, her air, her manner, her way of walking were unlike those of any other girl he had ever known. Also, he thought she was lovely beyond all comparison; and she was certainly pretty, with dark hair and eyes, a

good skin and a straight nose, although any woman could have given you a dozen reasons for counting her among those who had "just missed it," and no man before Frank had ever adored her at first sight.

They met first in the village street, three days after Frank came back from Salonika. Her father was a widower, and for the past two years she had done quite a lot of parish work for him. She was only nineteen, but she had a somewhat precocious air of maturity in talking to the village women.

She crossed the road to speak to Frank on that occasion of their first meeting.

"Oh, how do you do? You are Mr. Oliver, aren't you?" she said, holding out her hand. "I've heard about you, you know, and about your losing your father while you were in the Army. I'm so awfully sorry!"

Poor Frank could not have been more embarrassed if an angel from heaven had fluttered down into the road in front of him.

"You were in Mesopotamia, weren't you?" She encouraged him, a little disappointed by his dumbness, for she had heard that his father had been the village schoolmaster and had expected to find Frank different from the other young men, most of whom were equally dumb, although a few were inclined to be too bold.

"Salonika," he corrected her.

She crinkled her forehead with a girlish perplexity. "I ought to know where that is, of course," she said. "But I can't remember exactly. . . ."

"Macedonia," Frank mumbled. "Between Turkey and Greece, on the Ægean Sea."

"Oh, how exciting!" Miss Dalgleish exclaimed. "But were you ever in Greece? In Athens?"

Frank shook his head. "Neutral country, you see," he explained.

"Yes, of course. How stupid of me," she commented. "But you really must tell me about it some time. I'm so interested in all these places and I've never been out of England. Awful admission, isn't it? Oh, and I nearly forgot what I specially wanted to ask you. They tell me that you used to sing in the choir, and you'll promise to come back now, won't you? We are so depressingly short of men's voices. It's so horribly sad, isn't it? Mr. Heritage tells me that you had such a splendid tenor."

Frank had grown very slack in his religious observances while he was in the Army, and had not intended to get in with the Church again now that he had come home, but he instantly consented to take his old place in the choir.

"Oh, I'm so glad. That is nice of you, Mr. Oliver," Miss Dalgleish applauded him. She seemed to imply that he was doing her a personal favour. "Mr. Heritage is having a choir practice in the church at half-past six to-night," she concluded. "Shall I see you there? I'm in the choir too, you know. My father doesn't really approve of mixed choirs, of course, but the boys here do sing so badly that it's absolutely necessary to have a few women's voices to lead them. We may expect you at half-past six, then?"

"Yes, yes; oh yes, I'll come," Frank said.

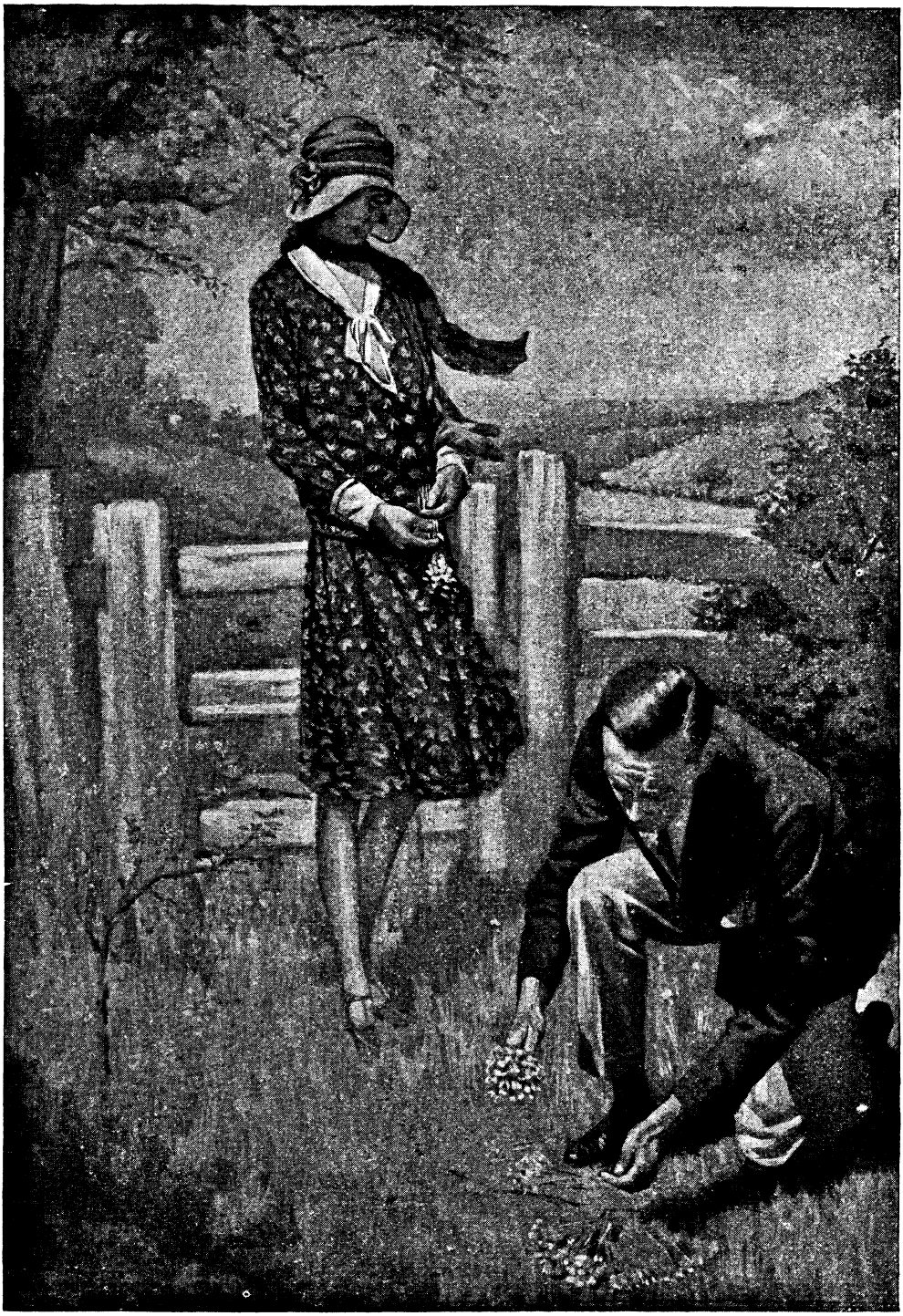
He did not then, nor for some weeks afterwards, make the least attempt to resist the adoration for Nora Dalgleish that had so instantly overwhelmed him. He saw no reason why he should. It was a lovely, exquisite thing that had come into his life, and he had no more thought of the possibility, however remote, of marriage with the Rector's daughter than of marriage with Saint Teresa or Joan of Arc.

All he asked was the opportunity to see her now and again—not to speak to her, for in her presence he was awkward and tongue-tied—and this Heaven-sent chance of sitting opposite to her twice every Sunday and at choir practice on Friday evenings was all that he asked. Even then he was afraid to look at her, venturing no more than one swift occasional glance as they stood up or knelt down, with, perhaps, a furtive peep or two, well disguised, in the course of the sermon.

"That nice Mr. Oliver, who sings in the choir, interests me rather," Nora confided to her father a few weeks after Frank's return. "I'm sure he's clever, but I think he must be a—a misogynist, is it?—a kind of woman-hater, you know. Mrs. Tomlin was telling me something about him this morning. *She* says he ought to get married, and I think so too. But she said that 'he'd never taken no notice of girls,' and that 'he'd always kep' 'isself to 'isself'—I think that was how she put it. It does seem rather a pity, don't you think?"

"Ah, well, he's young yet," Mr. Dalgleish replied platitudinously. He had not so far had any trouble with Nora, and would not, in any case, have believed it possible that she should have anything but a parochial interest in a working carpenter.

And Nora held precisely the same opinion as her father in this connection. Neither of them took any account of the fact that



"Frank, overcome now with shame and remorse, went down on his knees and began with bent head to gather up the scattered cowslips."

they were already come to the heart of spring, with summer treading on its heels. Nor did they have any picture of Frank Oliver sitting in his cottage with a half-finished design for an honest dining-room table before him, but sighing and gazing out of the window at the young green on the ash trees and the white flower of the may that filled his little room with scent, ruefully contemplating the fact that this was only Monday and that there were three more evenings to be lived through before Friday came—instead of getting on with the work he loved.

III.

IT must have been the spring waking in Frank's blood that made him so shamefully forget himself on the very first occasion that he and Nora were really alone together.

He had given up all idea of work that evening. June was but a few days away; he had missed all except the more frankly displayed magic of the earth's renewal; and he decided that he would walk out to Hurt Wood and listen to Nature for an hour or two as he used to do when he was a boy—without one thought of the possibility that he should meet Miss Dalgleish returning from her own commune with the spring and carrying an awkward double handful of cowslips.

They met at the high stile that marks the old "right of way" in the fence dividing the property of Sir Hector Groves from that of the village squire, Sydney Heritage. And Nora, encumbered by her cowslips and perhaps startled by the sudden appearance of this unexpected parishioner at the very moment she was negotiating that awkward descent, tripped, tottered forward, and wildly clutched at that sturdy pillar of a man right in her path to save herself from ungracefully falling on her nose.

And then the sober, stolid Frank shamefully forgot himself and his humble origins. There could be no excuse for him other than that the wine of spring had gone to his head and intoxicated him to such a point of madness that when Miss Dalgleish fell into his arms something in him was paralysed and he was physically unable to release her.

That was all. He attempted no other caress, not so much as an inclination of the head toward the hat that was brushing his chin. But for a period that was no doubt counted only as a second or two by the gross mechanism of a watch, he held her to him in those massive arms of his, from which, however much she had desired it, she could never have escaped by force.

As a matter of fact, she stood perfectly still, and even after he had released her made no effort to run away; while Frank, overcome now with shame and remorse, went down on his knees and began with bent head to gather up the scattered cowslips.

Miss Dalgleish, indeed, found herself in a most curious and unprecedented state of mind. She knew perfectly well that she ought to feel grossly insulted, that the proper thing for her to say was, "Mr. Oliver, how *dare you*?" and that, generally, she ought to be shocked and outraged and very determined to punish this common young man for his perfectly horrid behaviour. Instead of which her chief regret at the moment was that now he had been so silly she would have to leave him as soon as he had collected and restored her cowslips.

And she didn't want to go. It seemed to her that when she went something very exciting and curious would go out of her life. Moreover, she had the most perfect confidence that, despite that odd little misadventure, this young man was entirely reliable. She hadn't the least fear that he would attempt to repeat that inexplicable performance. She was, in fact, far more sorry for him than for herself. He looked so miserably humble there on his knees, hiding his face from her and taking such an unconscionable time collecting that double handful of cowslips.

And when he had, at last, picked them all up and with averted head silently tendered them to her, she had a sudden inspiration to pretend that nothing whatever had happened.

"Thanks so much," she said brightly. "I'm not usually so clumsy, you know, Mr. Oliver, but really that is rather a nasty stile, isn't it? And I had my hands full. Isn't it absolutely gorgeous out here this evening?"

Frank stood perfectly still. A murderer unexpectedly reprieved on the scaffold could not have been more conscious than he of some amazing, miraculous happening that had surely set the whole world spinning in a new course. He had sinned beyond all forgiveness, and not only was there to be apparently no punishment for his sin, he was even to be rewarded.

"I was just going into the wood," he mumbled.

Miss Dalgleish laughed gaily. "And I was just coming out of it," she said. "Do you by any chance know what the time is?"

Frank consulted his father's watch. "Half-past eight, Miss," he said. He did not usually say "Miss" when he spoke to her, but if she were wonderfully going to stay and talk to him it would be as well for her to know at once how humble and submissive he now was.

"Is that all?" Miss Dalgleish exclaimed. "It *is* so jolly having these long light evenings. I can't think why they didn't bring in the Daylight Saving Act years ago, can you? Don't you find it very useful for working in your garden, or are you too tired after your long day at Harris's?"

"I'm not tired," Frank said; "but I don't do much to the garden. You see . . ." Speech seemed to be coming more easily to him since her incredible act of forgiveness—he did not pause to ask himself why—and she was listening to him with an effect of almost eager interest. "You see," he continued, "I've got a notion of setting up for myself when I've enough capital—making furniture—something of the sort. Not the ordinary kind. I'm going to make my own designs. And—well, that's what I generally do when I get home—go on with the designs, you see."

"Oh, but *how* interesting," Miss Dalgleish commented in what she meant to be her best parish manner, but in which she, herself, was conscious of an unwonted spontaneity. "Do tell me all about it."

And he did, warming to his story as he explained his feeling for modern design, and glancing at her now and again with a new sense of having come, not certainly to her unattainable level, but to within speaking distance.

Moreover, a new and rather shameful question was formulating itself just below the threshold of his consciousness, a question shameful enough to be sternly inhibited when it came to the borders of definition, but desperately exciting, nevertheless. Was it possible that she hadn't minded his holding her like that? Because although, being endowed with all the virtues as well as all loveliness, she might in her infinite kindness have sought to put him at his ease again, there was really no need for her to keep him talking all this time.

And twenty minutes later she was still leaning against the stile that had tripped her, and they had come to the story of his lost inheritance.

"But what could have happened to the money?" Nora asked.

"Mr. Neale said perhaps he gave it to the Mrs. Carter who used to do for him," he said. But seeing the doubt on Miss Dalgleish's face, he continued apologetically, "Well, it's a mystery"; and then remembered the scrap of paper his father had left. "There was another mystery too," he added, feeling in the pocket of his jacket and after a moment's search finding his father's message under a handful of nails. "The old man left this to me in a sealed envelope."

The paper had suffered some damage, but Nora was still able to read it. She puzzled over it with an intent frown for a moment or two before she said hesitatingly, "You don't think he hid it somewhere, do you?"

Frank always took a little time to assimilate a new idea. "Hid it?" he repeated thoughtfully, and then continued, "He might have done anything. He must have been clean crazy before he died."

Nora pursed her lips. "Odd, certainly," she admitted. "But not exactly crazy. He knew you and so on, you know; and answered one's questions quite sensibly."

"He might have hid it," Frank ruminated. "But where?"

"Why, here, of course," Nora replied triumphantly, indicating the scrap of paper.

"There?" Frank responded, gazing hopelessly at his father's message.

"Yes, of course," Nora said. "Tell me, to begin with, which way you used to go."

"Not any way particular that I know of," he said.

"Oh, yes, yes, think!" Nora adjured him. "Didn't you have a favourite walk or anything that you used to go together?"

"His favourite walk was over towards Quinton, along through Bolter's Farm, you know," Frank said.

Nora screwed up her eyes as if she were mentally visualising the walk in question. Then she suddenly clapped her hands. "Yes, yes, yes!" she exclaimed excitedly. "And that way you *do* see two hills, one big one on the left—I forget the name of it—and that other little one away out on the common the other side."

"Yes, that's right," Frank agreed stolidly.

"Well, then?" she demanded, and, as he still seemed at a loss, continued impatiently: "But don't you see? You go to the big hill, find the two trees, one great and one small, and from the taller you will see the clumps of gorse; and under the big one you'll find the buried treasure. Oh, Mr. Oliver, do go to-morrow evening. Promise, will you? Oh, and may I—would you mind?—may I come with you?"

Might she come with him ?

That night, as he was bidding his daughter good night, Mr. Dalgleish chanced to notice that her cheeks looked very flushed.

" You've surely got an unusually high colour to-night, Nora ? " he remarked with a touch of anxiety.

" Yes, my face burns rather. It's the sun, I think," Nora said, putting up her hands to cover her blush.

" I didn't notice it till just this minute," her father said. " You're sure you haven't caught cold or anything ? "

" Quite sure, Daddy ; quite sure," she told him. And that, at least, was the truth. But how could she possibly have told him that that vivid blush of hers had not been due to the sun but to a sudden queer sensation of being clasped by two astonishingly solid arms ? She could feel the exact places on her body where they had held her.

Perhaps she had better not go with him to-morrow evening ?

IV.

SHE went, nevertheless, talking brightly on the way out to Pytchencote Hill about buried treasure and the laws of treasure-trove, which would not, however, apply to this particular case. And her companion listened, made an occasional comment, and continued to prove himself as modest and trustworthy as he had always been—as she was sure he always would be. More than once in the course of their two-mile walk she told herself that there was not the least fear of that happening again. Probably he had not *meant* to do it last night.

Pytchencote Hill was a landmark in that undulating country, approached by a path that twisted about, running alongside fields under cultivation, until you emerged to within a hundred yards or so of the summit, which had never been tilled, was covered with heather, gorse and bracken, and crowned by a clump of beech-trees.

It was when they began the ascent that Nora turned the conversation on to the subject of exactly what Frank was going to do with his money when he had dug it up.

Frank fingered the trowel he had slipped into his jacket pocket and explained that he would need a thousand pounds of it for his plant, before he added, " But we haven't found it yet."

" But of course we shall. You haven't surely the least doubt that we shall, Mr. Oliver ? " Nora protested. " It's all so plain and obvious."

" If you say so, Miss Nora," Frank agreed submissively (what would she say if he told her that it wasn't altogether quite such an accident last night ? Anyway, she couldn't have *minded* it a scrap. If she had she'd never have come up here with him. Why, up at the top, they'd be as much alone together as if they were on a desert island).

" You don't remember if there were two trees particularly, a big and a little one, anywhere about ? I've never been here before, you know," she was saying.

" No. Not that I remember," Frank said. " There's a whole clump of trees up top."

And, indeed, they had passed through the last gate now, were out on the waste land of the crest, and there in full sight was a group of a dozen splendid beeches, some certainly taller than others, but no two of them particularly noteworthy above the rest.

Nora stared and frowned. " Well, let's get up to the top," she said with the first hint of uneasiness coming into her voice.

But when they had reached the very summit, though they had a view of a wonderful expanse of rolling, peaceful country, neatly partitioned into irregularly shaped fields, with a wide perspectived pattern of hedgerows in which grew frequent oak, elm and ash trees, there was no particular pair whose contrast of height especially drew the attention.

" It might, of course, be almost anywhere," Nora admitted after a long scrutiny of the panorama below them.

" Well, hardly that," Frank corrected her. " Because there are no gorse-bushes down there."

" That's true," she admitted, more hopefully. " Well, as the trees have failed us, what about the clumps of gorse ? "

But there, too, they could find no guide. There was gorse all over the hillside, big and little and medium-sized clumps in an infinite profusion ; and although, after many careful reperusals and reconsiderations of the enigmatic paper, they presently explored the base of a score of gorse-bushes, searching evidence of recent disturbance, even Nora had to admit that they had far less chance of finding the treasure there—if it had ever been hidden at all—than of picking out the needle from the proverbial haystack.

They had come back to the crest of the hill and were standing in the shadow of the beech trees, when Nora said, " Oh, I *am* so sorry," and put out her hand to him.

Frank hesitated a moment and then took it firmly in his own. Such a slender, soft little thing it seemed under the gentle pressure of his own powerful fingers; and once again that paralysis of the will took him and he could not release the lovely, feminine thing that rested there so trustfully.

"I'll do without it," he said.

"But it will take you years to save a thousand pounds," she protested.

"Seven or eight, I expect," he admitted candidly.

"It does seem hard luck," she said softly, and looked away from him over the lovely panorama of peaceful country, set in high relief now by the long shadows of evening. But she made no smallest attempt to withdraw her hand.

"I wouldn't ha' minded so much, if . . ." Frank began.

"If what?" she prompted him.

"I can't tell you," he said, and after a long interval added, "Not yet, anyway."

Nora became aware that it was quite time to go home; but, again, she had a great longing to stay. The rectory was so dull, and this place, for some curious reason, so immensely exciting. .

"Why not yet?" she asked.

"Perhaps not ever," he replied.

"I can't think why not," she said.

"I don't suppose you can. I shouldn't like you to," he returned.

"Aren't I to know ever, then?" she asked a little wistfully.

"I'd never dare tell you," he answered.

He had meant it, after all, she was thinking; and now if she persisted, he would tell her why he so much regretted the loss of that money, and after that . . . It was certainly time she went home. The last bright edge of the setting sun had just disappeared with an effect of startling suddenness, and they had a two-mile walk before them. It would be dusk in the village before they got back, and the women at the cottage doors would wonder what she had been doing out alone with a young man at that time of the evening.

She gently withdrew her hand as she said: "Well, I'm afraid it's no use staying here any longer, is it?"

Frank shook his head and turned away down the slope. "The old man was clean crazy," he said; "there's nothing in it. Likely as not, he burnt the money."

"You've looked all over the cottage for it, I suppose?" Nora asked.

"Every joint of it," he told her; "the garden too. I'd bet my life on it's not been hid anywhere there."

"Do you know what I've just thought of, though?" Nora suggested. "Perhaps that message of your father's is a cryptogram, a cipher of some sort?"

"Might be," he agreed without enthusiasm.

"I wonder if you'd mind my showing it to Mr. Heritage?" she continued. "He's awfully clever at that sort of thing."

"Well, no, so long as he wouldn't tell anyone else," Frank replied. "You see . . ."

"Oh yes, of course I do," she agreed. "We should have all the village out treasure-hunting. But I'm sure we could trust Mr. Heritage."

"I should say so," Frank said.

They had almost come to the last field-gate and in two minutes they would be out of shelter of the tall thorn hedge and in the high road. And in that moment Frank made up his mind. He'd tell her. If she said she hadn't meant anything by letting him hold her hand up there, he'd go away, live the other side of the town, or leave Harris's and get another job. A man of his sort could always get a job.

"Just a minute, Miss Nora," he said, stopping in his walk.

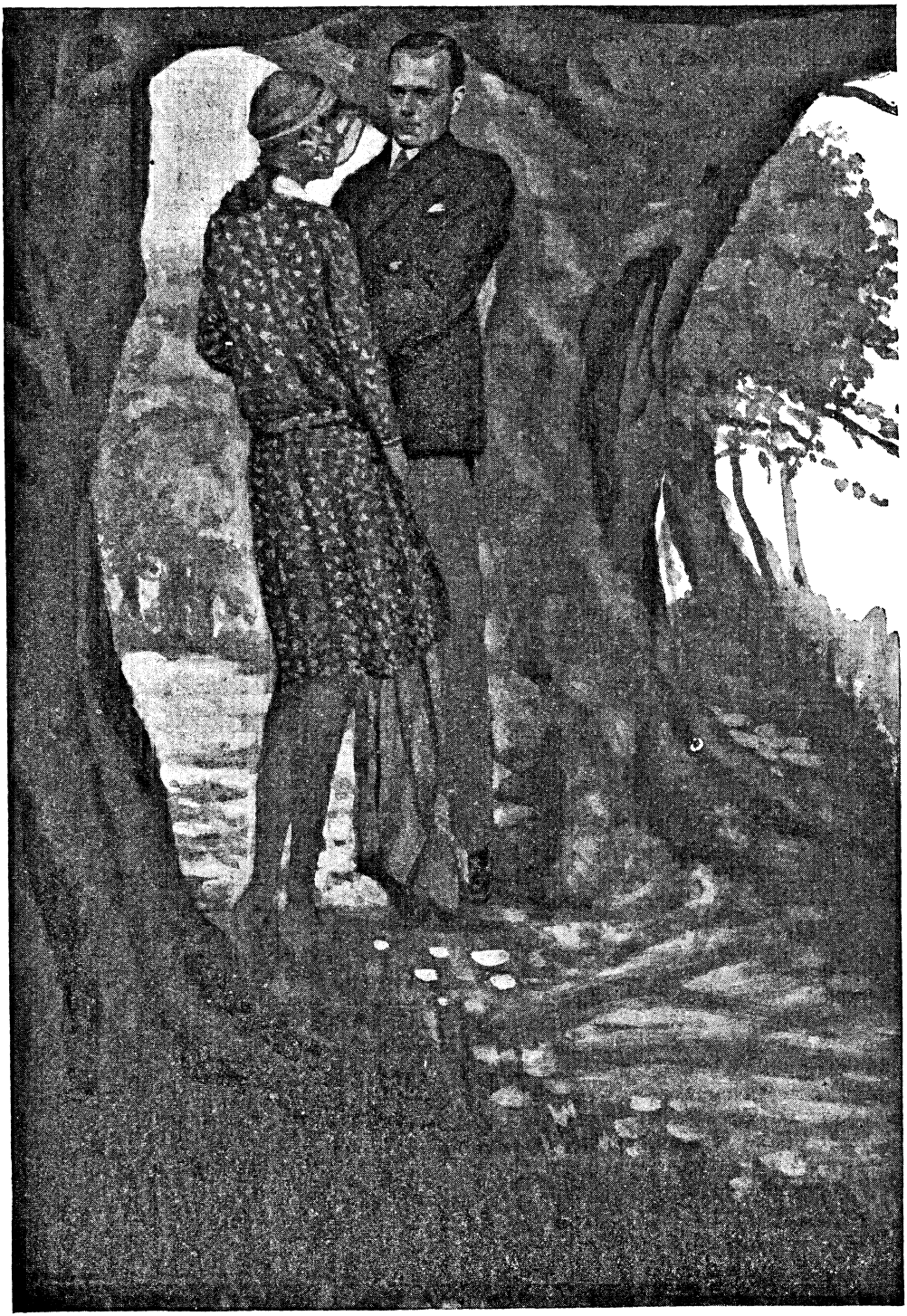
"What is it?" she asked, stopping, also, and looking up at him.

It was rather dark there already, under the shadow of the big hedge, but she had known by the sound of his voice what he was going to say.

"Why I was so anxious to have that money," he began, and then tried again: "What I couldn't tell you up there, when I said there was a reason . . ."

She knew that she must stop him. What would her father say if she told him that young Oliver, Harris's foreman carpenter, had asked her to marry him? Besides which, she wasn't at all prepared to give him any answer herself. She wanted, now, to think about it all quietly. She hadn't thought about it so far; she had really had no idea that it would come to this—not so soon.

She began to walk on again. "No, no; don't tell me now," she murmured in a little hurrying voice; "and—and I don't think we'd better go back together through the village. People might say . . . You understand, don't you? And about that paper, I'll show it to Mr. Heritage and tell him not to say anything to anyone. He's



"Frank took her hand firmly in his own. Such a slender, soft little thing it seemed under the gentle pressure of his own powerful fingers."

awfully clever at that sort of thing. I feel sure that he'll guess what your father meant; and then you will find the money. I'm perfectly certain you'll find it."

She had slipped through the gate and out into the road with a little shy wave of the hand to bid him good night before he quite realised what was happening. Had she been playing with him? No! He would not believe that. She wasn't that sort. But she'd been sorry for him. That was why she pretended not to notice anything last night by the stile and let him hold her hand just now. He must have been mad to think she could ever look at him. Clean crazy, like the old man had been.

Slowly, rather wearily, he retraced their last walk together, lingering here and there to recall what she had said and just how she had looked; until in the fast falling night, he found himself again, all alone now, at the crest of Pytchencote Hill, under the beeches.

He was still there when the moon rose a little before midnight, but all his meditations had brought him back to the same determination. He must leave the village. The sooner the better.

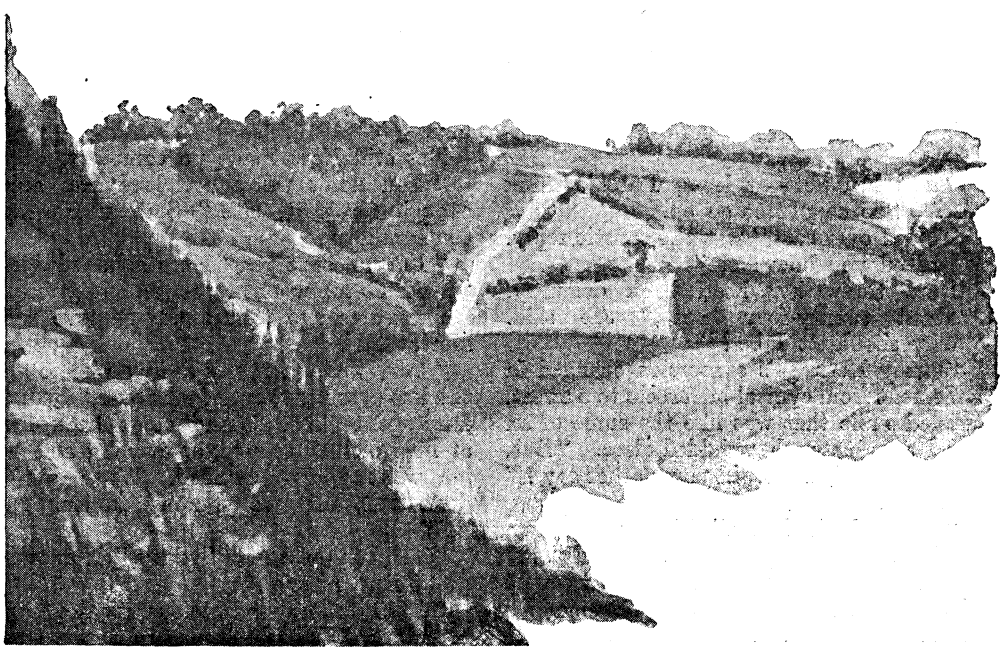
And to think that if his father hadn't been crazy he might have had a chance. He was sure now that she had liked him; and if he had had his own shops and been doing well . . .

V.

MR. HERITAGE, honorary organist and choirmaster of the village church and squire of the parish, was a crooked little man. He had one shoulder higher than the other, eyes of different sizes, a twisted smile and a slight hump. Also he had a wry humour, saying bitter things with a great effect of earnestness to see how you would take them, and when you summoned up enough courage to contradict so rich and important a person, he would break into a smile and tell you that you were quite right.

Nora thought he was wonderful, and they were great friends, such great friends that she had no hesitation in going up to the Hall at half-past nine in the evening to consult him about those strange directions for the discovery of Frank's inheritance. She found him in the library, sitting by the open window, looking out into the rapidly deepening twilight.

"There's something I want you to do for me, Uncle Sydney," she began as soon as he had brought up another chair for her and



resumed his original position. They were not related, but he was thirty years her senior, and they had decided that he should be her uncle.

"Naturally," he returned drily, "otherwise you would not have come to see me in the middle of the night."

"Middle of the night!" Nora protested.

"Practically," he said. "You ought to have been in bed half an hour ago."

"My nurse is out this evening," she replied. "Now please be serious. This is something really important." And she told him with many stumblings and hesitations the story of Frank Oliver's ambitions and the tragedy of the lost money. "He's—he's, I'm sure, such a worthy young man, you know," she concluded. "I should so very much like to help him."

Sydney Heritage had looked at her once or twice with that twisted, cynical stare of his as she was speaking, but when she finished his only comment was to hold out his hand for the critical scrap of paper.

"You see . . ." Nora began again, but he interrupted her.

"Naturally, I see, chatterbox," he said. "All sorts of things. Among others that you went up Pytchencote Hill with young Oliver and stayed there all alone with him until after sunset. Were you searching for buried treasure *all* the time?"

"Uncle Sydney!" Nora remonstrated, blushing furiously.

"How long have you been in love with this young carpenter?" he continued ruthlessly.

"But I'm not—at least, I don't think . . ." She could not go on.

"Head over ears," was the caustic reply. "I asked you how long."

Nora threw her head back defiantly. "About twenty-four hours," she said. "Why shouldn't I be?"

Sydney Heritage's expression changed in a moment from cynical bitterness to a sweet, twisted smile that was like the smile of an angel seen through wrinkled glass. "But, my dear child, what will your father say?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know," Nora murmured, suddenly on the verge of tears. "If only . . ."

"If only Frank Oliver had had a couple of thousand pounds and a business of his own, for instance? Dear me, yes. In that case he might have aspired even to the hand of Miss Dalgleish, seeing that nowadays it is only money that counts. But as it is . . ."

"But isn't it still possible?" Nora implored him.

"That you should marry Frank Oliver on his twopence a week or whatever it is he earns?"

"No, no; that he may still find the money. I was so sure that you'd be able to read the cipher."

"Cipher," Sydney Heritage repeated scornfully, glancing at the scrap of paper in his hand. "Poor old Oliver wasn't capable of any such thing."

"But then why write that?" Nora demanded. "And put it in a sealed envelope?"

"That, my child, is an instance, probably, of dream compensation," Sydney Heritage said. "The old fool destroyed the money, or lost it in some fit of imbecility, and afterwards persuaded himself, no doubt, that he had hidden it in some very safe place. Fantasy! And to make it more real he writes this absurd message, and makes a ceremony of addressing it to his son. He probably died happy in the belief that he was leaving an immense fortune behind him."

Nora's only comment upon that was a deep sigh. She found his explanation horribly convincing.

"The point is, my child," Sydney Heritage continued, "whether you are prepared to snap your fingers at all opposition and marry him on twopence a week? If you are, I'll believe in your love for him."

But still Nora made no comment.

"You don't think you love him quite enough for that, eh?" Sydney Heritage continued.

"I'm not sure yet," Nora acknowledged. "I didn't know until you said it yourself ten minutes ago that I was in love with him at all."

"Very well, then, my dear, go home and think it over for twenty-four hours," Sydney Heritage replied. "And come back here at nine o'clock to-morrow evening and tell me what you've decided. When you've done that, I'll give you my advice. Not before."

"Thank you, Uncle Sydney," Nora said, getting up meekly.

"Here, take your precious cryptogram," he returned, holding it out to her.

"You're quite sure . . ." she began as she took it from him.

"Pooh!" he interrupted her. "Don't count on it for a single moment."

VI.

FROM a casual inquiry or two made among his workmen, Frank discovered next day that he could get a room and his keep in Wilford for a pound a week. If he only paid that, he could save three pounds ten every week out of his wages. Also, he could sell the cottage, which would probably leave him a surplus of £150 or so after he had paid off the mortgage. In six years' time he would have enough to start on his own—unless prices continued to soar during the interval. That was what he was most afraid of. The cost of living, the cost of everything, was still steadily increasing. In six years' time he might want a capital of nearer two than one thousand pounds.

He had had his supper and was beginning to pack up his things—no use wasting time over the move—when a car stopped at his gate and Mr. Heritage got down from it and came up to the front door.

"Ah, good evening, Oliver," he said as Frank came out. "I came to see if you'd come up to the Hall with me and have a look at the oak panelling in the library. It's got the worm in it, on the south wall, and I want you to tell me what it would cost to cut out the bad wood and renew it to match the old work. Could you come back with me now?"

"Well, yes, sir, I could," Frank said. "But I don't know that I could take on the job. You see, I'm leaving the village at the end of the week. Going to live in Wilford, so as to be nearer my work."

"Very sensible," Mr. Heritage agreed. "Nevertheless, I'd like you to come and look at the panelling if you can spare the time."

"Oh, I can spare the time," Frank said. "I'll just put my coat on first."

Mr. Heritage appeared to be lost in reverie as he drove up to the Hall, and Frank made no attempt to distract his thoughts, which may have been concentrated on the management of the car. But he still seemed very absent-minded when they reached the library, showed Frank the worm-eaten panelling without any sign of real interest, and kept continually looking out of the open French window. Finally, he turned to Frank, interrupting him in the middle of a sentence, by saying, "Excuse me for five minutes, will you? I'll come back," and abruptly left the room.

Frank, silently cursing the necessity for this waste of time, continued to explore the panelling, until he was astonishingly interrupted by the sound of Miss Dalgleish's voice, saying, "Never mind that, Mr. Oliver. I want to speak to you," and he turned with a start to see her standing just within the open window.

She had, he saw, a new expression on her face this evening. Always before, even when she had let him hold her hand last night, there had been a dreaming detached look in her eyes, as if her thoughts were engaged less with him than with some distant imaginings of her own. But to-night she was looking at him very straightly and directly, as if the sight of him momentarily filled all her world.

"Yes, Miss Nora," he said humbly.

"I want to tell you in the first place," she began hurriedly, "that I'm afraid there's no chance of finding your father's money. I showed that paper to Mr. Heritage last night and he said there was no hope. I needn't tell you why, but he explained to me very convincingly how your father probably came to leave that message. I'm afraid you were right and that he was quite out of his mind at the end."

Frank shrugged his shoulders. "I never reckoned on that," he said. "Except perhaps for a half-hour or so last night. You—you seemed so sure."

"Yes, I was," she agreed. "Until we got up the hill at least. But, anyway . . . I mean we won't think of that any more. . . . What I want to say, now, is . . ."

But she couldn't get any further with that, and after waiting for a few moments Frank said, "I ought to tell you that I'm leaving the village on Saturday, Miss Nora."

"Yes, Mr. Heritage told me. I've just seen him," she replied. "But do you think you must?"

Frank nodded.

"Because of me?" she asked with a catch in her breath.

He nodded again, standing before her with his head bowed to hide his shame. He seemed to have been standing like that for quite a long time before she said suddenly:

"Well, you needn't."

He could make no sense of that, and raised his eyes to find that now it was she who was hiding her eyes from him.

"D'you mean that you're going away yourself?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"But. . ." he began, and the sense of what she might possibly be implying was

slowly coming to him, when she looked up and stared him straight in the face—though, indeed, she could hardly have seen him, for her eyes were brimmed with tears.

And still he stood, petrified, not daring to believe in the wonder of what those words and those tears might mean for him. He might have hesitated for ever if she had not held out her hands to him—both hands this time—and when he had taken them, drew nearer until she was wrapped in an embrace that made the embrace by the stile seem but a poor limp imitation. Even so, they must have stood there like that for a full minute before he dared to kiss her.

Fortunately for them, Mr. Heritage dropped a parcel as he was coming down the corridor and fumbled with it so long before he opened the door that if they had had no time to cool their cheeks, they were at least five yards apart when he came into the room.

"I'm a clumsy fool, I'm afraid," Mr. Heritage began at once, without, apparently, a glance at either of them. "But your father was no hand at making a package, Frank; though I'll admit that he was no fool when it came to hiding things. I had the devil of a job to find this, this afternoon. You'll forgive my having opened it. My anxiety was too great. But I've done it all up again just as I found it, so that you can have the child's pleasure of unwrapping your own present. Though I may be allowed, perhaps, to mention that there's a trifle more even than you expected, all in good Bank of England notes."

"But, Uncle Sydney . . ." Nora broke out as soon as she recovered her breath. "However . . ."

"Cht!" Mr. Heritage said disdainfully. "The thing was as plain as a pikestaff. I guessed it the first moment I saw the paper. Couldn't you children see that he always made a poor shot in crossing his t's. Between great and small choose the *latter*, obviously, not the taller."

THE UNKNOWN GOD.

("You carry a god about with you, wretch, and know nothing of it."—EPICTETUS.)

IN Life or Death, how hope to find
Tranquillity?
Waking or sleeping, how escape
This agony
Of Restlessness which tears my craven soul?
Trembling, my senses claim
As that fierce breath by which my fathers' souls were swept
This leaping flame,
This fire; which my small sons when yet they're scarcely grown
Will find, each one alone,
Within his breast
And henceforth never rest.
It is man's heritage, his glory and his shame,
A torturing spirit which he dare not name.

Yet, when in some green April dusk
I meet God face to face,
This spirit greets in ecstasy
Its beauty in His grace.
But still I fear to give It name,
Still dare not know Them for the same,
This Fierceness, that quiet Divinity;
This torment of Unrest, and that Tranquillity.

M. E. FRANCES PARKER.

CAVENDISH DENT

By ARCHIBALD MARSHALL

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

I.

SCAWBY HALL, in the advertisements that appeared only in the best papers, and not many of them, seemed to be no more than a boarding-house. But when you had accepted its terms and arrived there, it was seen to be very much more. It had been in the possession of the Dent family for over three hundred years, and was still in the occupation of Major Dent and his daughter, who were the last of an ancient but undistinguished family.

It was not run, however, in the way of an elaborate country house, in which boarders who are willing to pay a high price are treated as family guests, whether they are suited to such treatment or not. Perhaps little Major Dent would have preferred to make use of the large house and beautiful grounds, which were nearly all that were left to him of a once thriving property in that way; but his daughter, calm and businesslike, wouldn't have it so. Except that meals were taken at one large table, with her at one end of it and him at the other, visitors were left to go their own way and make friends with one another or not as they pleased. Miss Dent was far too busy, at least in the summer when the house was full, to play the part of hostess, and her father liked to pick and choose. If people came whom he recognised as the right sort he would sometimes offer them his company. With the rest he made himself agreeable if they sought him out. He had made the best of a bad job, and rather enjoyed the stir which the visitors brought. It was better, at any rate, to use his house in that way, and get rid of the gnawing anxiety of never having enough, than to sell it and be no longer Dent of Scawby. His instincts forbade him to make himself a nuisance by stressing his social status to people who were paying him for something else, and if he talked occasionally of what had been it was only to those of the right sort, and in the way he might have talked if they had been staying in the house as his guests.

Miss Dent never talked about the past, having quite enough to do in the present. There were those who thought she was standoffish, with her calm, almost indifferent, way of meeting advances. But she was only very busy, interested in what she was doing, and determined to make a success of it.

Nevertheless, Scawby Hall had more to offer than the ordinary country house turned into an hotel. The sitting-rooms and bedrooms given up to the use of visitors, if a little faded and even shabby in some of their appointments, were not at all like those of an hotel or boarding-house, being full of the things that had collected there through generations. The gardens were not kept up as they once had been, but were perhaps more beautiful with parts of them running wild. The house stood high, facing the sea, and a glen ran down from the more formal garden, with a stream full enough to provide waterfalls, with bridges crossing them. Half-way down was an elaborate terraced and battlemented garden, in which advantage had been taken of a bold outcrop of rock. This was left entirely to itself, and all traces of gardening had disappeared; but it was a delectable place in which to dream away a summer afternoon, with the coombes and the blue sea below, and the gulls hovering about it with their melancholy flutings; and in rougher weather it was well sheltered, and the favourite place of all for sitting out in.

This terrace, indeed, gave the house more of a reputation than anything else. It was unusual. Visitors thought about it when they went away, and came back to it. It was the first thing that new arrivals were taken to see, and Major Dent liked to take people there himself.

II.

HE took Mrs. Goodson and her daughter there one October day of mild but bright sunshine, and they were full of self-congratulations at having risked a holiday at that time of year, instead of going farther south.

"Well, I don't say we never get any bad weather in October," he said, "but it's often one of the most beautiful months we have. I've sat here and enjoyed the sun in November, and even in December. It's a curious place, isn't it? Very well done, I always think. All the natural features of the rocks are made the most of, and the built-up parts follow them naturally."

"How old is it?" asked the daughter.

"Oh, about a hundred years. Quite a hundred years. Rather more now."

"Constructed by one of your ancestors, I presume," said Mrs. Goodson.

"Yes. Well, not exactly an ancestor. He left no son, and a cousin succeeded him. Cavendish Dent made it, and I always say he must have got a lot of fun out of it."

"It must have cost an enormous amount of money."

"Yes, I should think it did. Cavendish Dent liked doing things that cost a lot of money. But he had very good taste."

"I dare say you wish now that his tastes hadn't cost quite so much money," Mrs. Goodson said archly.

Major Dent disliked this remark. He had rather suspected her opulent appearance, as indicating that she was not one of the right sort, and he would not have taken her to see the terrace if she had not been the last season's visitor, or perhaps if her daughter had been less pretty. "Oh, I don't know," he said, turning to leave. "One takes things as they come."

III.

AT another time a visitor more to his liking, an artist, who sat next to him at dinner, remarked upon the portrait of a handsome young man that hung over the mantelpiece.

It was a large picture, one of the most important in the large room, which was full of pictures. The young man sat under a tree, in an easy attitude, with his gun and his dog. He had taken off his hat, perhaps to give the artist an opportunity of painting his abundant hair, which had an obstinate wave in it. There was a wide landscape in the background, which included Scawby Hall, with a glimpse of the sea.

"That's a Sedley, isn't it?" asked the artist.

"Yes, a Sedley. We had a good many Sedleys at one time, but most of them had to be sold. I kept that one; a family portrait, you know. Cavendish Dent. It's a fine portrait, I always say."

"Yes, it's one of the best of his I've seen—of men. He must have enjoyed painting it."

"Ah, I dare say he did. He was a great admirer of Cavendish Dent's. You'll find frequent mention of him in his *Life*. He used to come and stay here at Scawby for months together, and he painted a good many landscapes. I should have liked to keep some of them, but they became too valuable. It was either one or two of them or Cavendish Dent, and I decided on the portrait. Don't you think I was right?"

"Oh, of course—a family portrait. I must read Sedley's *Life* again. What did your—what did this Cavendish Dent do?"

"Do? Oh, well, I don't know that he did anything much. He didn't have much time, for he died when he wasn't much over thirty. Well, he served in the Peninsular War. Wellington mentioned him in one of his despatches. He might perhaps have made a great soldier. I don't know. We're a military family, but none of us have ever—— Anyhow, he got wounded, not seriously, I believe, but it was enough to make him give it up and turn to Scawby. His father had died when he was a boy, and I suppose there was plenty of money that had rolled itself up during his minority. He was a sort of patron of the arts, you might say. There are a lot of his own pictures about the house, but I don't think they are very good. They tell me they're not. He dabbled a bit in everything. He was his own architect. He built this wing of the house."

The artist laughed. "I thought it was hardly up to the rest," he said.

Major Dent looked rather shocked. "Oh, I think for an amateur!" he protested. "Lots of people have admired it. Gothic, you know."

"Yes, I do know. He was a handsome fellow, your Cavendish Dent. Looks full of life."

"Oh yes, he was full of life. There's no doubt he enjoyed himself, as long as it lasted."

"Did he marry?"



"'Of course—a family portrait. What did your—what did this Cavendish Dent do?'"

"Yes, he married. He married a daughter of the Duke of Westmoreland."

"Oh, of course! Now I do remember. Lady Lavinia Dent. It's in Sedley's *Life*. But didn't he——?"

"He ran away with her. I think Sedley makes rather too much of that. After all, the Dents . . . Well, Cavendish Dent's own mother was the daughter of a peer, though not of a duke, certainly. A duke

seemed to be more of a duke in those days, don't you think so? I don't say that the Dents . . . Certainly there was a fuss about it, but it was all right afterwards. They had no children, and she didn't survive him for long. She was very beautiful. Sedley painted her, too. They used to hang on either side of the fireplace."

"Yes, I remember the picture. It went to America, didn't it?"

"Well, I *had* to sell that. Simply couldn't afford to keep it, at the prices they offered. I have an engraving of it—two, in fact. They tell me *they* are worth something now. However, I don't anticipate having to sell any more of my possessions. Make the best of what you have left, I always say, and forget the past. Far the best way."

IV.

MISS DENT seldom talked about the past, but to a woman with whom she made friends she expressed herself freely about this time upon the subject of Cavendish Dent.

"I feel annoyed when I look at that portrait," she said. "He looks so very satisfied with himself, but for the short time that he had Scawby he did more damage than any Dent before or after him. In fact, we're suffering for it now, though it is nearly a hundred years since he died."

"How was that, my dear?" They were going to the village together, Charlotte Dent carrying a bag for sundry purchases, Mrs. Glevering walking beside her with the deliberate step of an elderly woman out for air and exercise.

"Oh, we have never picked up from his extravagance. I don't think the Dents were ever very rich, but they owned a lot of land. It's all gone now. I don't exactly know when it went, for I don't take very much interest in my family history. I don't know anything at all about the man who came after Cavendish Dent. I don't think he's even buried here. I suppose he was away doing something to clear up the mess, and it was too big to clear up. Then came father's grandfather, and I think it was he who had to sell most of the land. My grandfather sold the rest, and poor father only came in for what is left now. He had to sell things too, till I grew up and thought of this way of saving the rest. Now we have our home, and it is safe for us."

"I think you've done splendidly," said Mrs. Glevering. She threw a glance at the girl walking beside her, who was largely built, and full of vigour and self-confidence, but too young, she thought, to have this responsibility upon her. "But it does seem a pity you can't live here in the way all your people have lived before."

"Oh, I don't mind that at all," she said, laughing at such an idea. "I have something to do, and I like doing it. People who lived in houses like ours used not to have much to do. I think they must often have got bored—the girls especially—and I'm never bored."

"I think it is true that the men had the best time in the old days, especially those, as you say, who lived in houses like yours."

"I don't know how they kept it up from generation to generation. Ours did, and then there came Cavendish Dent, who destroyed it all in a few years. What really happened was that he went out of his class. I don't believe in going out of your class. By the by, talking about class, pay attention to the man in this shop we're going to."

It was a sort of general store, for groceries, ironmongery, haberdashery and everything, and had a smell of cheese and calico. The proprietor was a large man with a grey walrus moustache, and an air of activity and leisure combined, as if he were ready to do everything that was required of him but would have preferred to do nothing at all. He bestirred himself to see that the assistant attended to Miss Dent's requirements and then settled himself for a little conversation, beaming at her with a look half respectful, half fatherly.

"We don't see you in the village half often enough, Miss Charlotte," he said. "I'm afraid you're working too 'ard. Still, if you want to get on it's the only way. Now, that son of mine!"

"Mr. Garstin's son has had a wonderful career," she told Mrs. Glevering. "We're very proud of him in Scawby. He was a Brigadier-General in the War."

"Yes, and only a Major now," said Mr. Garstin. "I never think that's quite right—do you, ma'am? Still, they've kept him in his regiment, and they do say he'll command it before long. There were others like him who rose from the ranks, but not many, I believe, who have kept on, and are rising still—or rising again, you might say. We shall see him a Major-General before he's done, Miss Charlotte."

"I hope we may," said Charlotte, and

looked at her list. "I forgot the washing-soda, Mr. Garstin."

V.

MAJOR DENT and Mr. Glevering came into the shop for tobacco and the four of them walked together to a farm a little farther on.

"Oh yes, a most remarkable career!" said Major Dent. "The Garstins have had that shop almost as long as the Dents have had Scawby Hall. Well, not quite, but they've been in the place for over a hundred years; you can see the tombstones. Just ordinary country people. You can see there's nothing remarkable about Garstin. I'm bound to say I never thought there was anything remarkable about the son either, though he was a bright lad at his books."

"Did he join up from here?" asked Mr. Glevering.

"No, he was a policeman. A policeman in London. He wouldn't stay here. He wanted to enlist, but his father was against that; so he joined the police. I helped him, and I'm glad I did. Oh, he's done remarkably well. Both of us Majors, now, what? Ha, ha! Garstin thinks he'll command the regiment, but I hardly think that. However, he must be a useful man, or they wouldn't have kept him on."

"Does he come here often?"

"Only once, since the War. I happened to be away then. Rather difficult position. However, I always say a man's exactly what he's worth. When he does come, I shall ask him to dine."

VI.

MRS. GLEVERING went into the farm-house with Charlotte, and the two men waited outside. On the opposite side of the road was an old stone-built cottage, and as they were talking a woman in a print sunbonnet came out of it and went to a well in the garden. She dropped a curtsey to Major Dent, who called out in a loud voice: "'Morning, Mrs. Collins! Poultry laying well?"

She did not reply. "Deaf," said Major Dent, "and getting deafer. I wanted you to look at her face. See anything in it?"

"I should think she must have been a good-looking woman when she was young," said Mr. Glevering, for the sake of saying something.

"Good-looking? Ha, ha! I don't know that the Dents have ever been considered particularly good-looking; although . . ."

"Is she a Dent, then?"

"Well, she is and she isn't. In blood she's as much a Dent as I am. In fact, if Cavendish Dent—that's who she comes from—had married her great-great-grandmother, or whoever it was, she'd be living at the Hall now instead of me. It was known that the child was his son, and they lived on in the place. They didn't seem to mind that sort of thing so much in those days—less squeamish, I always say. I've heard my father say that this woman's father—he was killed in the Crimea—was so much of a Dent in appearance that it was quite awkward. This woman's the last of them, and she has no children; so we shall get rid of the scandal at last. Ha, ha!"

"I think, if the truth were known, you'd find a lot of good blood among the peasantry of England. Perhaps there are more kinsmen and kinswomen of yours in Scawby than you think for."

"Oh, I don't think so. We're not that sort. Cavendish Dent was rather an exception. His own master at a very early age. Did what he liked. But he married happily—a love-match—and didn't live long. Probably that was his only lapse."

"It might not have been the only lapse of his descendants. However, we'll take it that your scandal comes to an end with this good lady. Yes, I think I can see a dim likeness. If you'll put on a sunbonnet when you get back!"

VII.

IT was not until a year later that Colonel Garstin visited Scawby. He did not command his regiment, but had retired with brevet rank, and was now engaged in commerce. The close of his army career had been a disappointment to his father, but the words "organising ability" were a consolation to him.

"He ought to do well in business. Great organising ability. Perhaps he gets some of that from me. I never knew where he got his taste for soldiering from. I'm sure if I'd been young enough to be taken for the War I should have shown the white feather. Never could abide bloodshed. But I might have done something in business, if I hadn't been so comfortable at home here. Not much room for organising ability in Scawby. You've got it, though, Miss Charlotte. Not

many young ladies who'd have done as well as you in what you've took up."

"Just careful housekeeping," said Charlotte unconcernedly. "Every woman ought to be able to do it, if she'll take enough pains."

"Ah, it's more than that, Miss Charlotte. It's the organising ability. My son has that, and he'll go far. You mark my words."

VIII.

COLONEL GARSTIN dined at the Hall on the first evening of his arrival. He was a powerfully built man of forty, military-looking, with his close-clipped moustache and his close-cropped stubborn hair, which would have waved if he had let it grow long enough. His speech showed



"The artist made a lazy sketch of them both."

traces of his northern origin, which he seemed to have taken no special pains to get rid of. Charlotte Dent, sitting beside him, was observant of the way he held himself. There were no signs of false shame about him. The table was full, for it was August, when every room at the Hall was occupied. It was known who he was, for his father talked about him to everybody who went to the village store. Those who were of what Major Dent called the right sort were interested in his conversation. Those to whom Major Dent merely made himself agreeable found it difficult to address him in the way that exactly satisfied them, but he did not take much notice of them. Perhaps his organising ability was shown in the way he picked out those who were worth while from those who were not, though he paid no court to anybody, unless it was to



"'Ben seems to have taken a fancy to you,' said his master, with a touch of jealousy."

his hostess. His admiration of her became apparent to everybody when he had been in Scawby for only a few days.

IX.

A YEAR later, Colonel Garstin and Charlotte Dent were engaged to be married. There had been some fuss about it, but both of them knew their own minds, and they had cut through the fuss without troubling themselves much about it.

They were sitting one golden Sunday morning in September on the terrace, which they had to themselves. The wide plain of the sea was spread out in front of them, blue and shimmering, and the murmur of it could be heard from the rocks below, mixed with the cry of the circling gulls.

"I should like to tackle this place," said Garstin, looking round him at the rocks, overgrown with grass and roots of heather and nodding harebells, and what had once been garden beds but were now chiefly gorse patches. "You could make a lovely garden of it, and it would be something to do."

She smiled down at him. She was perched on a jutting battlement from which she could see the coombes below, while he sat on the stone seat at her feet. There was a look of pride and fondness in her eyes. It was plain that she had found her mate. "You always want to be doing something," she said. "I like it as it is. It's so calm and peaceful. Still, if you want to tackle it I'll help you. It was laid out as a garden once."

He looked up at her, and his eyes softened at the look in hers. He took her hand. "You'll always help me, whatever I do, won't you?" he said. "It's true I like doing things. Calm and peaceful! Yes, I like that sometimes, especially with you. But I never see anything round me that I don't want to improve. I should like to get Scawby Hall back to what it used to be. Get back some of the land. I'd work for that. If I'm not a Dent, our children will be. I'll put them back where they belong."

It had been agreed that he should take her name. Major Dent had made that stipulation, when he found that his qualms about the marriage would not prevent it taking place.

X.

HIS qualms had not altogether subsided, though he was making the best of it, according to his simple philosophy. The artist had returned, and to him he unburdened himself.

"Of course we've come down in the world," he said. "I know that well enough. You can't do what we're doing and remain just the same. The right sort of people are extra polite to you, and the wrong sort of people think they are better than you are. Well, let 'em. That's not the point. He would never have expected to marry Charlotte if we'd been what we used to be."

"I rather doubt that," said the artist. "He strikes me as the sort of chap who would expect to marry anybody he wanted to marry."

"Oh, does he? Well, perhaps you're right. But it's Charlotte I'm rather upset about. I shouldn't have thought she'd have wanted to marry him. Was I right in letting her do what she has been doing?"

"It certainly hasn't done her any harm. She's a fine girl."

"Yes, she is. I always say so. And I'd a right, I think, to expect her to marry into her own class. You can't say that Garstin is of her own class, can you? If he hadn't come from the place—from that little shop—perhaps I might have felt differently about it. But you can't get away from that, and they never will either."

"Do you think it matters?"

"Well, perhaps it doesn't. No, I don't know that it really matters. But the Dents . . . They've always married into their own class. Perhaps you may say that some of them married above it. Cavendish Dent, for instance."

"Then this man is doing exactly what Cavendish Dent did."

"Yes, in a way that's true. Yes, I see your point. Oh, well, it's done now. I've got to make the best of it. I dare say I shall get used to it in time. And I like him all right for himself. He's a manly fellow, anyhow. And I should think he would get on well. He says he'll be able to keep up Scawby Hall for Charlotte by and by. Their children will be Dents: so the family will go on."

XI.

MAJOR DENT and Colonel Garstin went out shooting together, and the artist accompanied them with his sketch-book. Game was no longer preserved at Scawby, but there were plenty of rabbits, which the farmers liked to have kept down, a covey of partridges here and there, and even some grouse sometimes, come from the moor to feed among the corn-stooks.

They took their lunch with them, and the artist made a lazy sketch of them both, Major Dent in his precise heather-mixture shooting-kit, Colonel Garstin in rough homespun, workmanlike but not over-precise. He had taken off his cap, and sat at his ease, with Major Dent's retriever curled at his feet. "Ben seems to have taken a fancy to you," said his master, with a touch of jealousy.

"Dogs do," he said, looking down. "Perhaps because I never pet them."

XII.

THAT night at dinner they were talking about pictures. Charlotte said that none of the family had had their portraits painted since Sedley had painted Cavendish Dent. Mr. Trowse ought to paint her father.

"Oh, I'm no beauty," said Major Dent. "Better leave it at Sedley, eh? Unless Trowse likes to paint you."

"I'll paint you both if you like," said the artist, "though I'm not as good as Sedley."

He looked up at the picture over the mantelpiece, of the young man with the thick wavy hair and the dog lying at his feet, and then at Garstin, who was sitting opposite to him. His mouth twisted into a smile.

"I'll paint you too, Colonel," he said, "for a wedding present for Miss Dent."

IF YOU ARE A WOMAN.

THERE are certain days that you will remember—

The day when you discovered that you were very pretty.

The day when you discovered that you were no longer pretty.

The day when everyone understood you—even Nurse.

The day when nobody understood you—not even your Maker.

The day when your friend failed you. And she was a woman. If she had been a man it would not have mattered.

The day when you thought that the King bowed to *you* of all the populace.

The day when a child called you "Mummy" in mistake for its own.

The day when He kissed you, and it wasn't like it at all.

The day when you tried to turn on the gas—without lighting it . . . Your heart failed you.

The day when you cried because everyone you loved had grown so old.

The day when the man you had loved for years said to you, "At our age we cannot expect——"

The day when you were sentimental. You kissed his glove, or a dead rose, or something, and said to yourself, "No one need ever know."

The day when you thanked God that no one ever did know.

And the day when you know that no days matter to you any more—only the nights wherein you may sleep.

DOLF WYLLARDE.

VIRGIN SOIL

By MRS. C. N. WILLIAMSON

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

A MOVING picture can make you intimate with its characters, even in a two-reeler.

"Close up" of heroine domestically darning a stocking! (it may be her own or her husband's); she darns, and recalls her past. Or, she manicures her nails. Presto! You see the years unroll before your eyes and, before you can count ten, you know all about the lady.

The same with the hero. Only he had better be reading a book or taking a nap in a railway train, for, since the Armistice, heroes don't darn socks, and, we trust, seldom manicure their own nails.

The villain's lurid years may flash past your eyes while he loads his revolver or fills a bomb.

The "vamp" involuntarily betrays herself to the audience while she sprays seductive perfume behind her ears, or models a Cupid's bow with lipstick.

All this is convenient and time-saving; whereas in a short story along conventional lines you are bored by pages of information about what the people you've paid to meet did or were, before you met them.

Major Farnham, for instance,—Gilbert Farnham. They will keep on calling him "Major," although he left the Army after the war and settled down in a house that would be a country house if it weren't on the fringe of London. It's difficult to address a V.C. as "Mister."

Now, if you get a close-up of Farnham in the Tube, on his way to see his publisher, you learn a lot about him in a minute!

He isn't reading a book, but he's giving a few last corrections to the proofs of what will (he hopes) become a book.

He is forty-three, so you see how young he was when the War began, and he would look almost as young now if a touch of sciatica, a souvenir of the trenches, didn't draw his lean brown face into lines of pain now and then. Those lines might lead you to fancy him pessimistic or cross-grained, and he'd never go out of his way to reveal his inner self. It's only in his books, which he shamefacedly writes under a *nom de guerre*, that he reveals his love of beauty and secret yearning for romance.

He has ordained that his hero shall say to a beautiful, scornful girl who (of course) misunderstands him: "You make me feel like an utter hound!" But the printers have ordained differently and altered "utter" to "otter."

Gilbert Farnham uses golf words under his breath, and fiercely his fountain-pen bleeds blobs of ink. Nevertheless, he envies his hero, even though the heroine has rudely specified the kind of hound he is, a low beast nosing out that innocent animal the otter!

Why doesn't some beautiful though scornful girl breeze into his life and snatch him out of the monotony redeemed only by his garden?

And yet he fears girls and dislikes flappers. Too often beauty is not even knee-deep in the new generation. But—his house! The dullness of it! Mid-Victorian; left him by his mother. He would change many things if he knew how, but he doesn't know. Woman-interest—none.

Miss Lyddy Spencer, his small niece's governess, his housekeeper, is negative. You'd never know that she, as an individual, is in the room with you; and she seldom is. Nice creature. Good creature! Makes him comfortable. But . . . Oh, what an immense word is "but"! Only equalled in the English language by that heart-breaking "if."

Farnham had felt obliged to adopt his niece: "Little orphan Annie" sort of business. He would have been a prize combination of pig and cad if he hadn't taken charge, but . . . Well, there you go with "but" again!

So ends the close-up of Major (or Mr.) Gilbert Farnham, not wearing war ribbons,

and not even having the decoration of a golden hair left with a good-bye kiss on his old but well-cut brown tweed.

After this " flash back " to his home and half-acre garden with delphiniums hiding the past. It cannot reveal her thinking of the said past, because she isn't; but impressions are there in static form and can be reproduced with appropriate detail on the screen.



" Giving a few last corrections to the proofs of what will (he hopes) become a book."

end wall, he fades temporarily off the screen, while leaving the Tube station in the street nearest his publishers.

The picture then shows the house of the ex-soldier, would-be novelist; one of those suburban, middle-aged houses, neither possessing the artistic beauty of a young bungalow nor the mellow bloom of a Tudor cottage. In it you behold Lyddy Spencer, the governess-housekeeper, who has also something of a middle-aged air: no fresh peachiness of youth, no noble dignity of middle age.

She is perhaps thirty-eightish, which, to some women, is twenty-eight, or even eighteenish. Not so with her. She has never had time to think about herself. Practically, she doesn't know she exists, for all her years have been devoted to others.

You see her before a small and unbecoming mirror on a cheap dressing-table in her own room. It is the sort of room which mechanically collects all the furniture which nobody else will have.

Miss Spencer is dressed to go out, in exactly the wrong clothes, and is engaged in putting on the wrong hat at a wrong angle. This " close-up " of her is the appropriate moment for the film to flash back over her

She is revealed as a young girl taken from school to keep house for a father, as selfish as she is destined to become selfless. She plays mother to two young sisters. She keeps one servant and does the work of three; also doubles as dressmaker, milliner,

governess and chaperon for the sisters, whom she considers beautiful. Father dies; girls marry; house is sold; Lyddy is free, with a little money, most of which goes to help out the needs of the married sisters. She is recommended to Major Farnham and is delighted to accept the job; has now been in it for six years. Violet is sixteen; and perhaps the hat is put on at a rather less becoming angle than usual because Lyddy Spencer is feeling guilty of carelessness and general inadequacy. This is because of a remark Violet made before going off in a friend's motor to spend a few days.

Violet was studying herself at the time in the glass over the sideboard in the dining-room; a room more used than the drawing-room at Heath Lodge, because, of course, Major Farnham had his own study.

"Poor Uncle Gilbert!" Violet suddenly exclaimed. "I pity him!"

"Why?" Miss Spencer anxiously inquired. "Isn't he well? Is his sciatica——?"

"*His* sciatica!" echoed the girl. "It isn't his so much as ours, and the house's, and everything that's boring him and making him old before his time; driving him to delphiniums instead of to drink as it would do for lots of men!"

"My *dear* child, what do you mean?" pleaded Lyddy, by this time agonised.

Violet, plain and unattractive, lumpish and near-sighted, nodded at herself in the mirror, then waved her hands at the room.

"It's *my* fault, really," she moaned. "If it weren't for me, he'd probably have married some smart, pretty girl, and his whole life would be different. She'd have made him move out of this house or else changed everything about it. Oh, I'm not blaming you, Lyddy! You're the sweetest, kindest thing; and what I, and Uncle Gil, and the place, would be without you I daren't think. But you and I are no beauties, are we? Uncle Gil's secret is that he adores beauty. He hasn't got any round him and can't get any, except in the garden. His is not a man's life. But what can I do, unless I marry or drown myself? I'm not likely to bring off either stunt. But if I don't resort to one or the other before many years have passed, it will be too late for him to begin to live!"

Just then the motor came, and before Lyddy had regained breath, Violet was gone.

What had come over the child? She must have been lying awake at night, thinking.

An awful load of guilt lay heavy on Lyddy Spencer's heart. A great deal of what Violet had blurted out was true. Lyddy felt a criminal. She had gone blundering on, year after year, with her eyes shut and her brain full of cotton-wool while a splendid man's life was slowly spoiled. Lack of beauty! Lack of personal happiness! That was the trouble, of course. She had been too busy to realise. . . .

Useless to defend herself by asking: "What could *I* have done? A hired housekeeper, a paid governess!" She simply ought to have had the wit to do something!

As she trotted from one local shop to another, ordering groceries and other equally uninteresting things with no joy of life in them, Lyddy told herself that, anyhow, she could resign her position and leave Major Farnham free to put someone else in her place—someone beautiful, clever and young; a wife, or in any case a woman of fascination whom he might fall in love with and ask to be his wife.

There was Violet, of course; nothing could remake Violet into a beauty with that nose and those eyes, unless she went to one of the plastic surgeons you read about. But a different sort of person in her own—Lyddy's—place would help.

As for changing herself, Lyddy didn't even contemplate the miracle any more than she contemplated the apparition of a ring of moons round the sun. She did, however, after finishing her errands for the house, recall that this was her day for a shampoo. And even the shampoo date would have been forgotten had she not found herself in front of the hairdresser's where, once in three weeks, she was accustomed to go.

"Might as well get it over," she decided drearily, and went in.

It was a small, one-man establishment, save for a manicurist who attended at certain hours, but was considered good because the proprietor was French. In front, brushes, combs, cold creams, and perfumes were displayed. At the back were curtains dividing the cubicles from the shop—one for men customers, one for women.

To Lyddy's surprise, a young man (Monsieur Arnaud was elderly) bowed to her from behind the counter. He was even more French-looking than Monsieur Arnaud, who had lived for years in England. The cut of his gay little black moustache might have named itself "A Night in Paris."

"Madame desires?" he suggested in English, with the accent of southern France.

"Well, I was going to have a shampoo and a clip," explained Miss Spencer. "But Monsieur Arnaud isn't here. I can wait——"

The slim young gentleman hoped that Madame would not wait. He was the nephew of Monsieur Gaston Arnaud, and of the same name. He, Jules Arnaud, was about to join him in business: had been in it for nearly three weeks. The Uncle Gaston was taking his first holiday for many years. If Madame would permit, the nephew would show her the latest methods of Monte Carlo—Nice—Cannes.

Lyddy could not bear to dash that hopeful smile from under the gay moustache. She allowed herself to be persuaded. She walked like a lamb to the slaughter, behind the curtains, took off her hat and gloves and, with a sigh, sat down in her accustomed chair. A large towel, which smelt very nice, was draped round her shoulders. Something in that perfume carried her away, away into the past! The present ceased to exist for her until she was wrenched back into it by a terrible sensation. A pair of huge, sharp shears had lopped away half her hair!

Lyddy could hardly believe that the thing had happened. Her horrified eyes opened wide to stare into the mirror. Heavens, it was true! This fiendish Frenchman, this demon barber, was calmly cutting off her hair just below the level of her ear-lobes.

"Stop! Stop!" she screamed.

The man stopped, startled.

"But, a thousand pardons! Have I hurt Madame?" he stammered.

"You must be mad! You've cut my hair!" gasped Miss Spencer.

"But, it was what Madame asked!" Jules reminded her. "A shampoo and a clip. Naturally one does the clip first. As Madame's hair is inclined to curl, I thought a water-wave——"

Lyddy wailed that this tragedy came of trusting herself to a stranger. Monsieur Arnaud always clipped half an inch off her hair. She hadn't dreamed . . . What was to be done?

Jules was desolated. He could only attempt to console Madame (since the other half of the hair must follow the first) by reminding her that most ladies *did* wear their hair bobbed or shingled: hence his mistake. He had taken it for granted . . . but Madame should, on the other hand, have nothing to regret! She should see what an effect he would give!

Lyddy wept. "I shall be so undignified—at my age—so dreadful! I could *kill* myself!"

Jules protested. Madame had not an age. She was still young. With her hair as he would arrange it, she would be even younger. Ten—fifteen years would drop from her as the hair had dropped.

Hastily he sheared what was left, and Lyddy could not restrain a sob as she saw those short, straight, brownish blonde locks roofing her head like a Devonshire thatch.

At the sound of that sob, the curtains were timidly parted. The pretty little manicurist who worked half a day here, half at another shop, peeped in to see if murder was being committed.

Lyddy had never had her hands manicured, but she knew the girl well by sight and tearfully explained the hideous mistake.

"Why, never you mind, Miss Spencer!" Miss Button consoled her. "You'll be lovely when you're done. M'seer Jules, why don't you give her that camomile and lemon wash of yours? Yes, that's right. Do! And Miss Spencer, just to take your mind off till you can see how nice you are, let me manicure your nails while he works. We won't charge you a penny. It'll be on the shop."

Lyddy consented, because the girl's presence was comforting. So, she soon discovered, were the warm, scented water and caressing touches.

Jules implored his victim not to look in the glass until the whole process—washing, drying and waving—was completed.

At last he said, "Now, Madame!" in a proud tone.

Lyddy opened her eyes to face a new self. The brownish straw thatch had become a helmet of gold. There were soft waves and ripples that glittered under the hard electric light.

"Now, isn't that beautiful?" coaxed the manicurist.

Lyddy had to admit that it was.

"But it does not suit *me*," she added.

For an instant there was silence, while Jules was thinking of something to say. But Miss Button thought first.

"I say, Miss Spencer," she exclaimed, "will you let me *make* it suit you?"

"How could you?" Lyddy mourned.

"I'll show you," was the answer, "if you'll give me half an hour."

Lyddy, desperate, consented.

Miss Button flew out of the cubicle into

the shop, where she could be heard opening the glass top of the counter, and fussing among boxes and bottles.

Jules was thankful to be summoned by a new customer (male, a candidate for the next-door cubicle) and for a moment Lyddy was left alone with her new self. Her very hands were strangers to her! They looked lily-white in contrast with the shining, rose-pink nails. Hands like an actress's, Lyddy thought. Still, they *were* pretty—very pretty! She'd never known she had hands like that.

"To go with your hair *now*," argued Miss Button, "you must have what I call a face to match. Just a little powder, over this foundation of cold cream, you see. Oh, isn't it pearly? And a touch of this lipstick so your mouth won't look pale. Wonderful stuff! It's kiss-proof."

"Kiss-proof!" thought Lyddy, bitterly. Nobody kissed *her*. Nobody had, since her sisters married. Violet wasn't a kisser and there was no one else—never would be. Lydia Spencer was virgin soil. But—well, the lipstick was on! Not too red! Just a coral pink that alluringly outlined the shape of the mouth.

Lyddy feared to speak lest she should destroy the effect, which was certainly agreeable.

Miss Button profited by her client's coma to brush the long pale lashes with something black or brown, and darken the delicate arch of brow.

"Why, Miss Spencer, you're a beauty!" gasped Miss Button, with the joy of a true artist. "A *beauty*!"

Lyddy didn't speak. She couldn't. She was staring at the vision in the mirror. *She*! A beauty!

What was it that Violet had said? No beauty in his house, no beauty in his life." Gilbert Farnham. Poor Major Farnham . . .! And now, here was beauty: she, Lyddy Spencer, had it.

She wasn't in Gilbert Farnham's life, of course. She wasn't, couldn't be, important enough for that. But she lived in his house. What would he think when he saw her next? Would he notice the change, he who never seemed really to look at her, or see her at all, except as a man sees a chair or a table?

But Miss Button was chatting on.

"Oh, dear Miss Spencer, I never saw anything so wonderful! If you just had a different dress and hat . . ."

"I'll buy a different dress and hat," Lyddy heard her voice answer, as if it were the voice of another woman—a quite reckless, daft woman.

"Please, Miss Spencer, several dresses and hats," implored Miss Button. "One of everything wouldn't do much good, would it? And you ought to have the right shoes and stockings. Oh, you *will* go on with this—this treatment, won't you, all the rest of your life? Now you see what you really *are*, you won't slip back, will you? Wouldn't it seem a shame?"

The words echoed through Lyddy's glorified head. "Seem a shame!" Well, it would; not to go on being beautiful when you could, would be like—like throwing flowers into the fire—a crime!

Lyddy heard herself laughing excitedly, as a young girl laughs. "I'll do my best to keep it up," she promised. "I'll buy all these things you've used, and—I'll try and learn to do the trick myself."

"I'll teach you," eagerly offered Miss Button, as proud of Miss Spencer as if she'd created her. "Only you must come here once a week for your hair. And—and you won't be angry if I ask you something? It's because I take such an interest; you've been Mr. Arnaud's client so long. Are you—sure you know the kind of clothes that would suit you *now*?"

Lyddy, surprised, paused to reflect.

"I mean," Miss Button went on, "if you'll excuse me, your usual things look—they make *you* look—er—a bit virginal!"

Lyddy laughed. "That ought to be a compliment! But I suppose you mean old-maidish! And I've felt old-maidish—for years. Maybe it was a shell. I thought it was *me*! I have a sort of idea, the way I feel now, that I can choose the right things. I'll do it while the mood is on!"

At the first moment, when they had the place to themselves, Miss Button and young Mr. Arnaud jazzed joyously in each other's arms, for they had loved at first sight and were engaged to be married. They were terribly pleased about Miss Spencer. She made them feel that they were geniuses and would have a great success in life.

LYDDY had never taken a cocktail, but if she had tossed off two with a "kick" in them, she could hardly have been more reckless in mood.

"Pretty woman in poisonous clothes!" people who noticed her walking into a smart Regent Street shop would have commented. Three hours later, if the same people had



"At last he said, 'Now, Madame!' in a proud tone."

seen her floating gracefully out, their comment would have been different.

"Beautiful!" a man would have said, perhaps, vaguely aware of general perfection.

"Very smart!" would have been a woman's first thought. "Everything just right."

It had taken hours to do it, and even so she had had expert advice and assistance.

Lyddy had no knowledge of *chic* little shops in the neighbourhood of Bond Street. But the big shop in Regent Street hadn't failed her. She had rushed home from the hairdresser's and collected six months' salary, mostly intact, which (luckily) she'd neglected depositing in the bank. Major Farnham paid Miss Spencer generously for her double duties, therefore she had a substantial sum in hand. And the wildness in her eyes betrayed an intention to spend it all!

A sale of "Paris models" was going on in this particular shop. Mannequins were showing them.

"Why, I believe I'm as good-looking as she is, and maybe not so much older!" Lyddy compared herself with a tall, slim blonde in a jade-green street frock of some silky material. The wondrous being had a cap-like hat to match, which pushed out a crescent-shaped wave of golden-brown hair over each shell-pink cheek. And at the left side of the hat was a small bunch of tight, buttony roses which reminded Lyddy Spencer that it was spring.

Spring! And she had beauty which she could bring into the dull house if not the life of Gilbert Farnham.

"Green is either lucky or unlucky," she'd heard the Irish cook remark on St. Patrick's Day.

She would chance it—and buy that dress.

She bought it—off the mannequin's back; and the hat off her head; also a string of near-jade beads off her neck.

Strange how, when you are buying, one thing leads to another! The dress and hat led to stockings and shoes, the former "pale flesh" and transparent as chiffon, the latter smart green. Then gloves had to be chosen; white, with green stitchings; a green handbag, with a collection of pretty vanities inside.

When she had everything, Lyddy decided to change in the shop, and have her "rubbish" (as she thought of it now) sent home. "I'll give it to Norah," she said to herself. "She *is* an old maid! I'm not."

She certainly didn't look like one. Those stockings, especially, weren't—weren't—well, the word Miss Button had used!

Before putting on the new frock—warranted to be "just her measure," Lyddy tried a few evening dresses and selected two.

"I'll take them home with me," she said, "in a taxi."

Glorious extravagance! But it all belonged to Beauty. So also belonged the delicate things the shop people called "undies"; the dozen pairs of stockings in selected shades which went with shoes and costumes recklessly ordered in various departments. The taxi was piled full. Lyddy remembered the old "history story" which she had told Violet, about Tarpeia the traitress, buried under the shields and bracelets the soldiers had promised as a bribe for her treachery. But, flushed and happy, she added to the pile by buying flowers, and a few absurd dainties for dinner that night.

Major Gilbert Farnham didn't encourage Miss Spencer or Violet to gather the darlings of his beloved garden for the house, and Lyddy's inferiority-complex had forgiven the suggestion. But she had no such complex, now! It was strange to be without it. Like the "Ancient Mariner" suddenly finding that he was rid of his smelly old albatross! Lyddy felt as brave as she was beautiful, and had the intoxication of knowing she was both. She bought pink roses. She bought yellow daffodils, quantities of both; roses, and branches of lilac. In fact, Miss Lydia Spencer's whole character seemed to be changed by a hair-bob, a lemon and camomile wash, a water-wave and a touch of make-up. Yes, what Mussolini was to Italy, that had been these things to her! She would never be the old Lyddy again. She would have a permanent wave in her hair and a permanent difference in her soul.

GILBERT FARNHAM had been a brave soldier; but as for the stern endurance of petty ills, every day in peace-time, that quality would never have won him his Victoria Cross.

He didn't believe in himself except where delphiniums were concerned, and a derogatory criticism on one of his books made him physically ill. Farnham was deeply ashamed of such weakness, but he could not overcome it.

He was in a very bad state on his way home, late this afternoon. "I'm what the Americans call 'sunk'!" he said to him-

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"There was a new look in his eyes; that same wistfulness and longing which had been in his books."

WHAT IS THE BEST TIME OF LIFE?

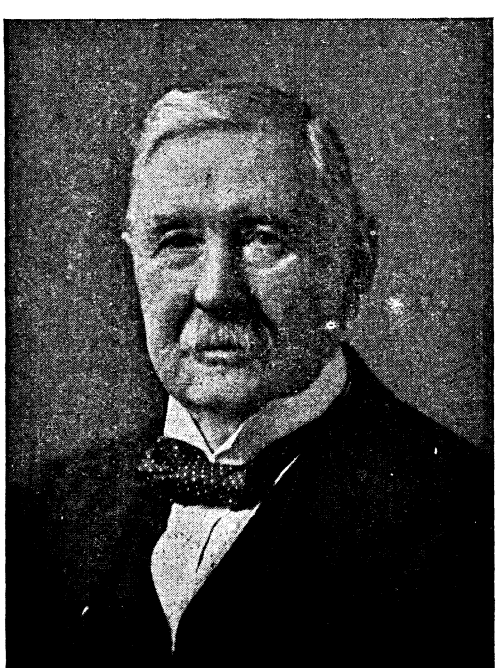
THE RIVAL CLAIMS OF YOUTH AND MIDDLE AGE

A SYMPOSIUM

contributed to by Mr. T. P. O'CONNOR, M.P., the "Father of the House of Commons"; SIR ARTHUR KEITH, the distinguished scientist; Mr. FRANK B. KELLOGG, of the famous "Pact"; LADY DOROTHY MILLS and ROSITA FORBES, the well-known travellers; the COUNTESS OF WESTMORLAND; JOAN CRAWFORD and JOHN GILBERT, the popular film stars; and MISTINGUETT, the celebrated Parisian actress.

Mr. T. P. O'CONNOR, M.P., the eighty-two years old Father of the British House of Commons.

WHAT is the best age in one's life? Is it in youth, in middle age or in old age? My answer to that question is that there is no "best age," for everything depends on the individual. Some people have a brief glimpse of happiness in youth, but end their lives in sorrow. Others have a sorrowful youth, but reap happiness in later years. Thus it is clear that happiness at any time in one's life depends entirely on circumstances.



[*Russell.*

MR. T. P. O'CONNOR, M.P.

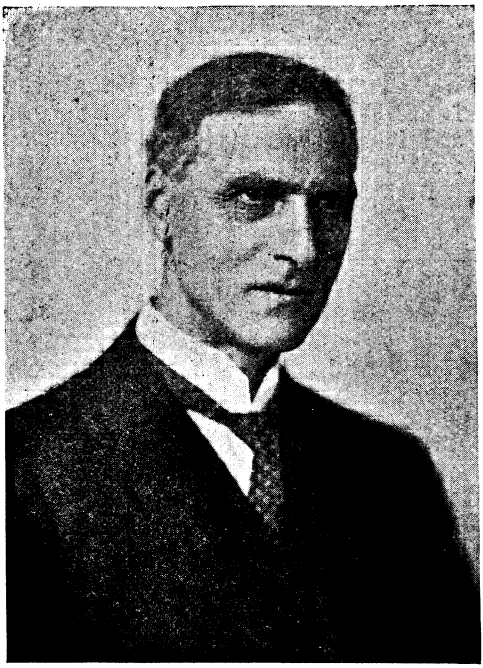
Most older people seem to think that youth is the best age. Personally I do not agree with this, and it is very seldom that one meets a young person who has this view. There are so many aspirations and expectations in youth and, consequently, many disappointments.

In the middle years of one's life, when one is well on in a career, there is usually no time to think about whether or not one is happy.

There are some people who think that old age is the best period in one's life, because they imagine that it is free from worry and trouble. Personally I have not found that old age brings one the peace and contentment of which one hears so much. In fact, life is inclined to become more troublesome as one grows older.

In my own life, my best and happiest years were the first six years which I spent in the House of Commons. I think that was because I was so busy and had so many new and exciting experiences to encounter.

In this life I think that most people can be happy—that is, if they find out the right way to overcome difficulties.



[*F. A. Swaine, Ltd.*

SIR ARTHUR KEITH.

SIR ARTHUR KEITH, the distinguished anthropologist.

I AM asked to say what is the best time of a man's life. My answer is that no general rule can be laid down—it may be at any period in his career. I have known men who have told me that the best time in their life was when they were fifteen : I have also known men who have said they were happiest when they were eighty-five. So that the best period in a man's life may be at any time between fifteen and eighty-five. It all depends upon the individual.

If you were to ask an athlete what is the best time in a man's life he will probably say—when his physical powers are at their zenith. A business man will give you all kinds of answers varying with the different circumstances of the different individual cases. Ask a politician, and he may reply that the best time of a man's life is when he is at the commencement of his career, or he may say that it is when his early struggles are over and he is enjoying the fruits of his labours.

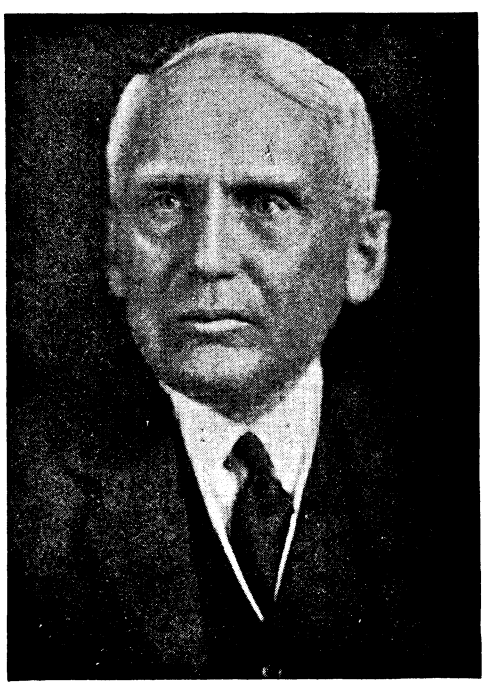
What is the best time in the life of a scientist ? Again the answer must depend upon the individual circumstances. In my own case it may have been when I was younger, or it may be when I shall have grown older. I cannot say.

Did not a famous man once remark that all men should be chloroformed as soon as they reach the age of sixty ? Perhaps he was right !

FRANK B. KELLOGG, the famous American statesman.

THE best time in a man's life is between seventy and eighty. Young and middle-aged folk think that we elder people have passed the age when we can enjoy the good things of life. They are wrong. The older we get, the more fun we find in watching the world go round. In my own case, I feel better now than I ever did. Idleness doesn't suit me and, having now retired from active Government work, I fill up my time with work at my law office in St. Paul and with golf. Golf is the best game for busy men.

One of my friends who is ten or twelve years older than I tells me, however, that being only seventy-five I have not yet reached the best decade. He says one only begins to live when one is well over the eighties. I look forward with considerable pleasure to that ideal age !



[*Topical.*

MR. FRANK B. KELLOGG.

ROSITA FORBES, authoress and explorer.

I SHOULD say the best age for a man is between thirty and forty: for a woman the best time of life would be between the ages of twenty-six and thirty-six.

At those ages both men and women are in a position to get the best out of life. Early youth is inexperienced, and the process of gaining experience generally hurts in some way or another—both with men and women, and perhaps more particularly with women.

A man between the ages of thirty and forty and a woman from twenty-six to thirty-six are in a position to get the best out of life. They have then learned to discriminate between the good and the bad, and to realise that all that glitters is not gold. It is then that they find most interest in life, and it is then that they themselves are most interesting.

Does the fact that a person is interested in life necessarily denote that he or she is happy and contented? you ask. Yes, I think it does. When a person finds no interest in life he or she is never happy, and, vice versa, when one is happy and contented one always finds life interesting. A happy man or a happy woman is never bored—always interested in things and interested in people.



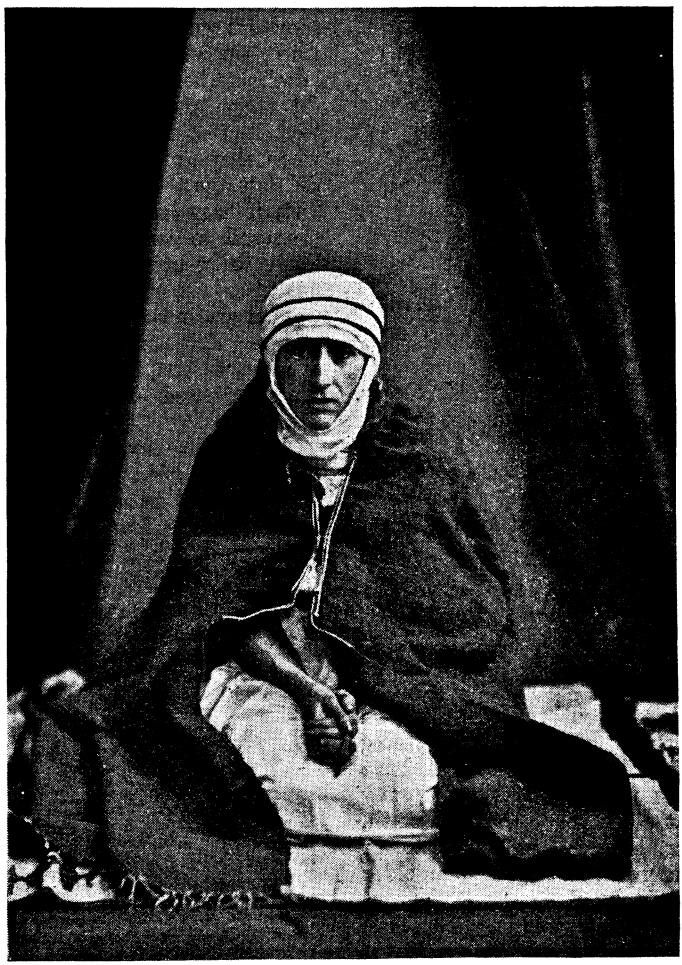
ROSITA FORBES IN ARABIAN PEASANT DRESS.

LADY DOROTHY MILLS, the well-known traveller and writer.

I SHOULD say that the best age, for a woman, is about thirty. By that time most women have acquired wisdom. You may ask : do women ever acquire wisdom ? It is a somewhat controversial point, but I should say that if a woman has not gained a certain amount of experience and acquired a certain amount of wisdom by the time she is thirty, she will never acquire it afterwards.

When a woman is in the early twenties she is too young to know much about life, or to have had much experience or knowledge. When she is over the forties she is too old to enjoy all that life can offer to a woman of, say, thirty.

Thirty, therefore, I should say, is about the best age in a woman's life. With a man it is different. Men do not grow old so quickly as women, they retain their youth and the spirit of youth longer. About forty, in my opinion, is the best age for a man. By then he will have achieved some of his ambitions, and still be young enough to get the most out of life. So many men arrive at their goal when it is too late to enjoy the fruits of their labours, and they always look back then upon their early struggles, and count that period as the best part of their life. I certainly do not think therefore that the best time in a man's life is when he can



[*Lassalle.*

LADY DOROTHY MILLS IN ARAB COSTUME.



[P. P. B.

JOAN CRAWFORD.

take a rest and look back over his career. It is when a man is just beginning to realise that he has achieved something, but that there still remains much more that he can do, that he is happiest.

That age, in my opinion at least, is when he is forty or thereabouts.

JOAN CRAWFORD, the famous film actress.

YOUTH, always youth. When did you ever hear a young man or a young girl lament their lack of years ? I have known hundreds of young people who envy the things that older people have—wealth, position, power, leisure—but I have never known any young person to grudge an older man his age. To be young and vigorous is everything. What middle-aged man or woman does not think longingly of the days of his or her youth ? As people grow old they realise that they were never quite so happy as when they were young.

Therefore, I certainly think youth is the best age of life. It is the springtime of life when everything lies in front of one, and there are no regrets for mistakes made and opportunities missed—a time when one has dreams, aspirations, hopes, ambitions. Above all youth is the time of love, without which one can never be happy. Youth, I think, then, is the greatest thing in the world, and the best time of a man's life or of a woman's is when he or she is young.

JOHN GILBERT, the popular film star.

TO a woman the best time of her life is naturally when she is most attractive. Some women are at their best when they are young—say between twenty and thirty—others are more charming and more admired when they have passed the youthful stage and are in the thirties. Most women, I should think, get most out of life when they are between twenty and thirty. At that age they are still young enough to flirt, if they want to, have generally been proposed to two or three times, and are likely to be proposed to again—if they are not already married. In the late twenties women are interesting to and interested by others. This makes for happiness. The average woman, however, is happiest when she is married—and that may be at any age.

The average man finds thirty about the best time of his life. By that time he has sown his wild oats, and with average luck his youthful indiscretions are buried in the past and have had no serious consequences. If he has ambitions, he is well on the way to realising some of them, and is still young enough to enjoy the good things of life. If



[P. P. B.

JOHN GILBERT.

he is a marrying man, he is married and settling down in a home. If he is a bachelor, he finds enjoyment in his work or in pitying his married friends and thanking whatever gods may be that he was not cajoled into the matrimonial state. At that age, too, the bachelor can still enjoy himself without hurting anyone's feelings, and can generally marry and settle down if he wants to do such a thing.

LADY WESTMORLAND, Society hostess and authoress.

TO be in the thirties is to be of an age when one is able to get the best out of life. Consequently it is as a rule the best time of anyone's life. By that age most people have recovered from the mistakes of their youth, are beginning to realise the meaning of life and have acquired a fairly sound sense of values.

Naturally I am thinking from a feminine point of view, but men also, I suppose, as well as women, make mistakes in their youth, think more intelligently as they grow older, and acquire a better sense of values after reaching the thirties.

Many people may think that youth is the best time of life, but I do not think it is. We do all sorts of mad and exciting things when we are young, but the pleasure is only temporary. We often have cause to regret them afterwards—very early marriages, for instance. The middle-aged man or woman before reaching forty has worked up to a certain position and standard—can look back on the spade-work of early years, and look forward to still further progress in the future.

MISTINGUETT, the celebrated Parisian actress.

THE best age depends on yourself. Many young people on the very threshold of their life are envying their



[*Marian Lewis.*

CATHERINE, COUNTESS OF WESTMORLAND.

elders who have already achieved the success they covet. And sometimes you will find that the elders who have won success envy youth and grudge the price of years they have had to pay. But as a rule I think you will find that most people will tell you that their best age has been that of their greatest success. Ask a great statesman, a great actor, a great scientist, they will all tell you the same, that the best age is that at which they happen to be at the time of their great success. Surely there could be no better age than when one is at the summit of one's powers, when one really feels that the world belongs to one to make or to break.

For my part I say that each age in turn is the best age. There is none better. It depends so much upon yourself.



THAT CHRISTMAS FEELING.

OR EVERYTHING COMES TO HIM WHO WAITS.

Our Great Public Schools

THEIR TRADITIONS, CUSTOMS & GAMES

By F. A. M. WEBSTER

HARROW SCHOOL

Forty years on, when afar and asunder
Parted are those who are singing to-day,
When you look back, and forgetfully wonder
What you were like in your work and your play,
Then, it may be, there will often come o'er you,
Glimpses of notes like the catch of a song—



Visions of boyhood shall float them before you,
Echoes of dreamland shall bear them along.
Follow up! Follow up! Follow up! Follow up!
Follow up! Follow up!
Till the field ring again and again
With the tramp of the twenty-two men.
Follow up! Follow up!

Harrow Song. 1872.

IN Lanfranc's church at Harrow-on-the-Hill lie buried the bodies of John Lyon and his wife, Joan.

Above the stone which covers them and in juxtaposition to their effigies in brass may be found the following inscription:

"Here lyeth buryed the bodye of John Lyon late of Preston in this p–ish Yeoman deceased the IIIth daye of October in the year of our Lord 1592 who hath founded a free Grammer School in this p–ish to have continuance forever and for maintenance thereof and for relyfe of the poore and of some poore schollers in the Universityes. Repayringe of high wayes and other good and charitable uses hath made convayaunce of lands of good value to a Corporacion graunted for that purpose Prayse be to the Author of all godnes who make us myndefull to followe His good example."

The word "yeoman" in this epitaph has influenced many writers to commit themselves to a definite statement that John Lyon, the founder of Harrow School, was a man of humble origin, and, as such, entirely the architect of his own fortunes. In point of fact he was, it would seem, a well-to-do country gentleman, living in the little hamlet of Preston, a few miles east of Harrow, and holding lands that had been in the possession of his forefathers since 1393.

It is said that the early death of his only son was the circumstance which inspired this Elizabethan gentleman to found Harrow School, but prior to the undertaking of that work it had been his custom to apportion each year a sum of twenty marks for the education of young children.

It is, however, generally agreed that Harrow dates back to an earlier ecclesiastical foundation than that of John Lyon, and there is a deed in the School chest dated 1596 which speaks of the new schoole or Church House. The suggestion, often made, that the first school at Harrow was founded by the Archbishops of Canterbury, who had there a country house, has found much favour with some authorities.

On the north side of Lanfranc's church-

yard stood the Church House, which had accommodated the Parish School from early days, and it was, perhaps, this school and the benefactions of the Archbishops, as much as those of John Lyon, that Shakespeare had in mind when he wrote *Love's Labour's Lost* and made Armado ask:

"Do you not educate youth at the charge house on the top of the mountain?"

To which Holofernes replied, "Or 'mons,' the Hill."

"In the year one thousand five hundred



A HARROW BOY IN THE TRADITIONAL ARCHERY COSTUME.

It was long the custom for Harrow boys to hold an annual contest in archery.

(From the original painting by Romney in the Vaughan Library.)

and seventy-one, Queen Elizabeth granted Letters Patent and a Royal Charter to John Lyon, of Preston, in the Parish of Harrow-on-the-Hill, for the foundation of a free Grammar School at Harrow," is the sentence with which begins the reading in the School Chapel on Founder's Day each year of the great list of the Benefactors, Governors, Masters, Old Harrovians and others, who have gradually raised the School upon the Hill to equal status with Eton and Winchester.

"Our house was built in lowly ways"—these are the appropriate words of the Founder's Day Hymn, for Harrovians know that they owe all they have to John Lyon first; and, afterwards, to those succeeding generations of Harrovians who have loved their Alma Mater, and not to such a Scholar-King or Warrior-Prelate as made Eton and Winchester secure for all time with ample resources.

When the Royal Charter was obtained in 1571 John Lyon divided his lands into two parts. The whole profits of the lands at Paddington were to be applied to the upkeep of good roads between London and Harrow, and the remainder of his estates at Harrow, and in the neighbouring hamlets of Alperton and Preston, at Malden in Bedfordshire, and at Kilburn in the parish of Marylebone, he bequeathed to the maintenance of the School.

The former bequest has become by far the more valuable, and that is why it is so often said that "Oxford Street is paved with Harrow gold."

The question of the endowment lands settled, and an attempt by the Clerk to the Signet to levy a compulsory State loan of £50 thereon having been frustrated, the philanthropist appointed six men of good local standing to be "The Keepers and Governors of the School called The Free Grammar School of John Lyon, in the Village of Harrow-on-the-Hill, in the Countie of Middlesex." To them, in 1590, he gave instructions for the building of the School and the appointment as Schoolmaster of "an able man not under the degree of M.A., and as Usher, or Under-Master, a B.A."

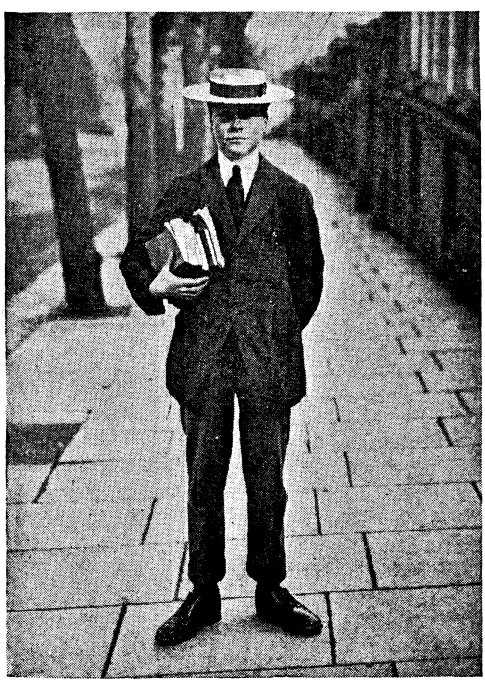
He allocated, also, a sum of £20 annually towards the maintenance of two scholars at Oxford and two at Cambridge, the same to be chosen for "towardness, poverty and painfulness," and preference to be given to children of his own kin.

Throughout my researches into the histories of the Public Schools I have been struck by the frequent reference to St. Albans, that ancient foundation of the Abbot Ulsinus. In this present connection it would appear that the very rules for the government and conduct of Harrow itself were modelled upon those of St. Albans Grammar School, or else that Sir Nicholas Bacon performed a similar service for both

institutions, since the two documents are almost identical, especially in style.

Among many things ordained by John Lyon at the time of the foundation of Harrow were the sports and games which met with his approval. These were enumerated as "driving a top, tossing a hand-ball, running, shooting and no other." All scholars had, of course, to "learn the catechism and attend church regularly," and the Master was enjoined "before all things to punish swearing and lying and such-like faults."

The education that John Lyon decreed was of a strictly classical nature; no English book was included in the elaborate list he drew up, and so long, in fact, did the classics maintain their privileged position that it was not until 1819 that a Frenchman was engaged to teach writing and arithmetic. These subjects he continued to expound for half a century, but never got out of the habit of his native pronunciation "*Arithmetique*," and so, to the Harrow boys of to-day, mathematics are still "Tique."



[*Sport and General.*

UNOFFICIAL DRESS.

Blue flannel jacket and grey trousers generally worn on all but ceremonial occasions. The distinctive Harrow straw hat, with its wide brim and low crown, is worn all the year round.



[*Sport and General.*

THE OFFICIAL DRESS OF UPPER SCHOOL BOYS.

Lower School boys wear the Eton jacket.

The Founder required, also, that school should commence each day throughout the year at 6 a.m., and the late Lord Shaftesbury was wont to tell how his Form Master, Mr. H. Drury, not infrequently used to dispatch his servant to gather the Sixth Form at the properly appointed hour. The modern custom is, however, more in keeping with our times, and so Summer school now starts at 7.30 a.m. and half an hour later in the winter.

To this change a reference is made in the Harrow song of St. Joles, the saint of the lazy boy:

> "Oh then King James, in wrath and ire,
> Degraded St. Joles to Joles Esquire,
> And now to punish the awful crime
> They get up at seven in winter-time."

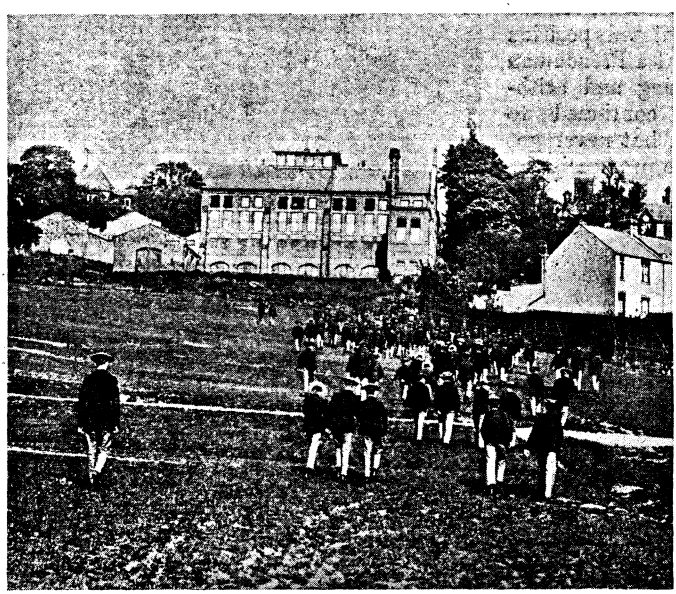
Archery provided, originally, the all-important pastime and parents were required to allow their children "a bow, three shafts, bowstrings and a bracer to exercise shooting."

In relation to this requisition it was the custom during nearly two hundred years for Harrow boys to hold an annual contest in archery at the foot of a tree-capped knoll, which was backed by a greensward reproduction of an ancient amphitheatre.

From half a dozen to a dozen boys took part in these competitions, the pageantry and ceremonial of which may be said, almost, to have rivalled that of Eton Montem.

The competing archers appeared clad in fancy dresses of silk and satin, spangled white and red, or white and green, in hue, with sashes and silken caps to match.

Apart from the contestants there were numerous officials, all of whom were allotted definite duties, and, needless to add, there were special customs inseparable from such a festival. For example, a flourish of French horns paid honour to the boy who shot within three circles of the target, while he who placed his arrow in the bull's-eye was awarded the coveted Silver Arrow.



[*Sport and General.*

OFF TO "BILL," OR CALL-OVER.

One of the costumes worn in the Archery Competition and a solid silver arrow are still preserved in the Vaughan Library at Harrow, and may be found in a case which stands against the west wall.

It seems that the Elizabethan Englishman, John Lyon, was fully in accord with the old Persian proverb that "a boy should be taught to shoot straight and tell the truth."

It was the opening of the Great Western Railway from Slough and an influx of undesirable visitors from London which put an end to Eton Montem, and similarly at Harrow Dr. Heath decided to abandon the Archery Contests at the Butts in 1772, by which time they had begun to attract large and disorderly crowds from the Metropolis.

But although the Archery Competitions were replaced by the "Harrow Speeches" in the eighteenth century, Harrovians were keen that this ancient custom of their school should not pass, a thing forgotten, into the realms of antiquity; and, in 1805, Dr. George Butler added to the School Arms an extra motto, "Stet Fortuna Domus," and the cross-arrows and laurel wreath which form the School crest. This crest is worn by Monitors embroidered upon the band of their straw hats. The old Archery Contests are recorded in Harrow's Song of the Bow.

The Harrow School arms comprise a *lion rampant*, in commemoration of the Founder's name. This is evident and, in all probability, was John Lyon's own coat of arms.

Among the ordinances of the Founder was one which stated that "no girls shall be received and taught in the same school," and one which clearly foreshadowed our present public schools system.

The latter provided that "the Schoolmaster may receive over and above the youth of the inhabitants within the parish so many Foreigners as the whole number may be well taught and applied and the place can conveniently contain, by the judgement and discretion of the Governors. And of the Foreigners he may take such stipends and wages as he can get, except that they be of the kindred of John Lyon, the Founder. So that he takes pains with all indifferently, as well of the Parish as Foreigners, as well of poor as of rich."

It would seem fair to assume from the rule just quoted that John Lyon was a broad and generous-minded man. He had no particular interest in "foreigners," by which he meant boys from other places, and was willing for the Schoolmaster to make as much profit as he could get out of them, but added the delightfully naïve rider, "except they be the kindred of John

Lyon." His object in admitting boys as boarders was probably twofold. Firstly, in order that the Schoolmaster might augment his income; and, secondly, to enlarge the outlook of parochial Harrovians by affording them the opportunity of mixing with lads from other places. None the less, all were to be given equal attention and the Foreigners, who doubtless would pay more, were not to have greater attention given to their education than the Schoolmaster would devote to that of the Parish boys.

Frankly, therefore, Harrow, like Rugby, was planned as a free Grammar School for as boarders "from many of the leading families of England."

From that time the character of the school was changed and it began to follow its present and now traditional course.

The final turning-point in the history of Harrow came, however, I believe, early in the eighteenth century. Up to that time, despite the efforts of Mr. Horne, the school had been none too well patronised by the nobility. But in 1717 Dr. Snape, at that time head master at Eton, threw himself whole-heartedly into the Bangorian controversy concerning the right of the clergy



[*Sport and General.*

BILL.

The Bill Master calling the roll on the steps in the School Yard.

the children of the local inhabitants and of the Founder's kin.

That both schools have become great while other Grammar Schools have remained mediocre has been due to the foresight of ambitious head masters and, especially in the case of Harrow, to the splendid backing of former scholars and friends of the school who have been fired by enthusiasm and tradition.

The rise of Harrow appears to date from 1669, when the Rev. William Horne, who left Eton to become Master of Harrow, obtained the sanction of the governing body to his plans for attracting "Foreigners" to transfer their allegiance from the sovereign ruling by divine right to him who was placed upon the throne by the people's choice. Dr. Snape stood unflinchingly for the rights of hereditary rulership, whereas Dr. Brian as stoutly supported the House of Brunswick and made it plain that Jacobite opinions would not be tolerated at Harrow. In these circumstances many parents, who doubted the principles in vogue at Eton, transferred their sons to Harrow, whose numbers rose to 144 boys in 1721.

These circumstances further stabilised the change in the development of the great school which had been set in motion by

the Rev. William Horne, and the "bill," or call-over list, of 1803 included many distinguished names, while the school numbered 351, which was one more than the number of pupils at Eton in that particular year.

The first sixty years of the nineteenth century were notable, for that period saw no fewer than five Harrow Prime Ministers. They were Mr. Spencer Perceval, Sir Robert Peel, Lord Goderich (the first Lord Ripon), Lord Aberdeen and Lord Palmerston. Incidentally, Byron, the poet, was school-fellow to Palmerston in the old Head Master's House, which was destroyed by fire in 1838, whereby vanished many priceless relics, for the panelling of the walls was covered with the carved names of famous men, such as are still to be found in the old Fourth Form Room.

In those early days of the last century (1805–1829) the Head Master of Harrow was Dr. George Butler, an ancestor of the famous Cambridge athletic blue, Mr. Guy M. Butler. Dr. Butler in his forty-seventh year, which Aristotle defined as marking the zenith of man's physical and mental powers, was a man of slightly under middle-height, but lithe of limb and well knit of figure, as he led the march up the hill to the school. Of his personal fitness there can be no doubt, for thirty years later, in January, 1843, near Northampton, he sprang from his horse and saved a woman from drowning in the river. A singularly appropriate piece of heroism since he it was who instituted "Ducker" and insisted upon Harrow boys learning to swim.

The growth of Harrow's splendid buildings dates from 1819, when there began the addition to John Lyon's School House of a right wing to contain the Speech Room. Upon that occasion the boys marched in procession, each treading sturdily upon the foundation-stone, which covered a collection of the coins of the period, and, even more valuable, a "bill" of the school written out by one, Bollaerts, and gracefully adorned by another of the boys, Isaac Williams.

In the same year began the benefactions of Old Harrovians, and others, which have so wonderfully endowed the school; and by 1890 upwards of £130,000 had been subscribed for various purposes. These benefactions, together with the original bequest of John Lyon, are remembered and recited upon Founder's Day.

In passing, one may mention the curious circumstances that Lord Palmerston laid the foundation-stone of the Vaughan Library in a deluge of rain on July 4, 1861, while Harrow's Tercentenary of 1871 was celebrated in such a tempest that the addresses of the speakers were rendered almost inaudible.

Having mentioned the Speech Room, one must, of course, say something about Speech Day. The building itself is shaped like a Greek theatre; there is a long and handsome dais from which the young orators address the visitors, whose seats, facing the dais, soar upwards tier upon tier.

But the Speech Room has other uses, and those visitors who have the good fortune to go to Harrow on the last Saturday of term or who stay on for the evening of Speech Day may realise the real love and study of music which prevails and has produced the famous Harrow songs, of which none is better known than that great epic "Forty Years On." It has been borrowed by many a lesser institution, and always has power to dim the eye of the Old Boy as he looks back down the long road of the years to the good days that come no more.

Harrow singing owes its institution to the Rev. H. M. Butler, D.D., who was Head Master from 1860 to 1885 and whose name is also commemorated by the football field.

From 1862 to 1885 some six generations of Harrovians knew the spell of Mr. John Farmer's musical genius and the poetic magnetism of such scholars as Bishop Westcott, Canon Bradby, Archdeacon Farrar, the Rev. J. Robertson, E. E. Bowen, who invented the genuine "Harrow Song," and Mr. E. W. Howson, while succeeding generations have enjoyed the compositions of Mr. Eaton Fanning and Mr. Percy C. Buck.

Singing, in fact, is a very important factor in Harrow School life. House singing is conducted regularly in the evenings of the Christmas and Easter terms, and there is a concert in the Speech Room on the last evening of term and on Founder's Day.

Places in the School Choir are much coveted, but a good many of the School Eleven seem to get in, and there is also keen competition among the "Twelves" of the Houses (tenors and basses in unison) and for the wreath and bell which are awarded each year for the best madrigal and glee.

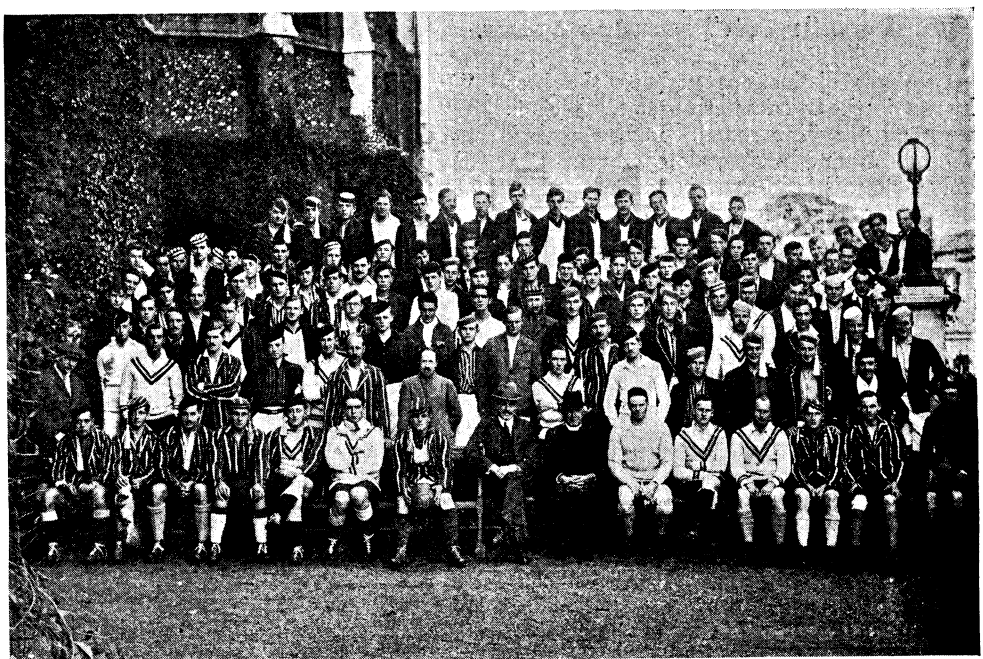
But Harrow songs are something more

than just jolly music, for the verses epitomise and enshrine every phase of the School life. Queen Elizabeth, no less than the Founder, "Lyon, of Preston, Yeoman, John"; Byron and Peel; Sheridan and Palmerston, are among the great figures of history who are honoured, and there are such traditional, but entirely fictitious, figures as "Jerry the Fag," "Willow the King," and "St. Joles," patron saint of lazy fellows. Then there is the song of "Ducker," the song of Bill (or call-over) under the style of "Here, Sir," the song of Euclid, and, best of all, "Forty Years On."

Many years after the benefactions and new buildings were begun, Dr. Vaughan, who was Master of Harrow from 1845 to 1859, gave real effect to the founder's original intention, by instituting a day school for the children "of the humble parishioners of Harrow." This school was designated the English Form, but its members were to have no communication with the boys of the Great School, either in school, chapel or playing fields. Up to at least 1650 very few but parochial children had been educated in the original school which John Lyon founded in 1571. The famous Fourth Form Room, incidentally, with its battered panels, carved with names of men who have since made history, is much the same to-day as it must have been when John Lyon left it more than three hundred years ago. It is the oldest room in the school buildings and was, until recently, still in use, but is now preserved as an unique "antiquity."

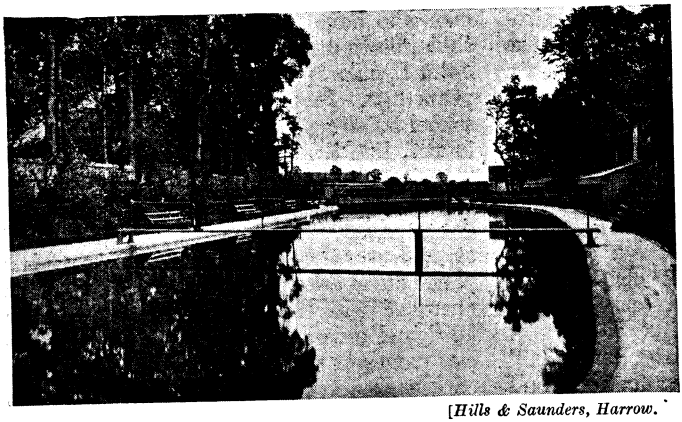
The Fourth Form Room is entered from School Yard on Church Hill, where "Bill," as call-over is termed at Harrow, takes place on holiday afternoons. It is a fine chamber, with Tudor windows dating from 1608 and an oriel of a later date. Countless names of former Harrovians have been carved by their owners upon the panels, among the most famous being those of Robert Peel (Prime Minister), H. Temple, afterwards Lord Palmerston, Lord Byron, R. B. Sheridan, Cardinal Manning, Anthony Trollope, J. A. Ramsay, afterwards Marquis of Dalhousie and Governor-General of India, F. Ponsonby, Earl of Bessborough, and Haddo, Earl of Aberdeen and Prime Minister of England.

Harrow, like so many of our ancient scholastic foundations, has its distinctive customs and privileges of dress. So many, in fact, that it is impossible to mention more than a few in the space of a single article.



THE PHOTOGRAPH. [*Hills & Saunders, Harrow.*

The taking of "the Photograph" is a solemn yearly function on Founder's Day at Harrow, when six or seven matches between past and present Harrovians are played under the Harrow Football code.



[*Hills & Saunders, Harrow.*

"DUCKER" OR SWIMMING PLACE.

Of dress distinctions perhaps the best known is the Harrow straw hat, which is worn all the year round. It has a very wide brim and a very low crown. The only time this head-dress is discarded is on Sundays, when it is replaced by the conventional top-hat. The official school dress is a swallow-tail (evening cut) black coat and waistcoat, with dark trousers for Upper School boys and boys over 5 ft. 4 in. in height. Lower School boys, under that height, wear the Eton jacket. The costume for games and half-holidays and free-time generally is a blue flannel coat and grey trousers. Since the War this unofficial dress may be worn in school hours and generally, except on Sundays and for official functions. The tail-coat worn by Upper School boys is a relic of ancient times, and it may be added that when a big boy in Lower School is granted by the Head of the School the privilege of wearing that dress instead of the Eton jacket he is said to have been given "charity tails."

Privileges of dress and conduct, which are very numerous, are known as "Privs." These "privs" are highly valued by the boys and are obtainable according to seniority and other distinctions. The Cricket XI alone wear a black-and-white speckled straw hat, instead of the usual white one, and Monitors, as already noted, sport the school badge on the hat-ribbon. Representatives of the School at various games, sports, gymnastics, etc., of course, may wear the appropriate scarf or belt of their distinction

It may be remarked, incidentally, that a Harrow boy, whenever he can possibly do so, adds "er" to the end of a word. Thus, Association Football owes its popular diminutive of "Soccer" to Harrow usage. Similarly the Harrow swimming place, properly styled "Duck-puddle," is known as "Ducker," "Yarder" signifies Yard Cricket, "Recker" is the Recreation Ground at the foot of the hill where the athletic sports are held, and "Footer" is Harrow Football.

"Bill," or call-over, as already stated, takes place in the School Yard on holiday afternoons, and below this yard is the old "Milling Ground" where many a dispute has been settled with bare fists in times gone by.

Cricket, of course, is Harrow's great game, and in connection therewith will always be remembered the names of Fred Ponsonby, Earl of Bessborough, the Hon. Robert ("Bob") Grimston, and such living giants as A. J. Webbe, M. C. King, A. C. Maclaren and Sir F. S. Jackson.

Horace Walpole has told us that cricket commenced at Eton as early as 1730, but one cannot find authentic records of the game being played at Harrow until 1771, and there is a good deal of doubt as to when



[*Hills & Saunders, Harrow.*

THE OLD FOURTH FORM ROOM.

the first Eton and Harrow match was played. The earliest suggestion of a date is to be found in a note pencilled in a book presented to the Vaughan Library late in the last century. This note makes reference to a match between Eton and Harrow in 1800, and there is good reason to believe that Eton triumphed at the old Dorset Square ground five years later.

These matters are shrouded in doubt, however, because the Pavilion at Lord's, where all the archives were preserved, was burnt down in 1832. That was the year, too, in which the inhabitants of Harrow allowed the school sole rights to play on Roxeth Common, which had been enclosed in 1803. The ground was, however, a thoroughly bad one and but little improvement seems to have been attempted until the first cricket professional was appointed in 1822, soon after the fixture with Eton had become a regular one.

Fred Ponsonby, already referred to as Lord Bessborough, and Bob Grimston had already started their University careers when, in 1843, Harrow, although numbering only 87 boys in the "bill," succeeded in beating both Eton and Winchester. These successes were mainly due to correct style and the principles of patient play which were being imparted to Harrow boys by Mr. Henry Anderson, whose mantle descended, subsequently, upon the shoulders of Lord Bessborough and "Bob" Grimston.

Perhaps the best fast bowler Harrow ever produced was F. C. Cobden, who, when at Cambridge, performed the remarkable feat of literally winning the all-important inter-university match by taking the last three Oxford wickets with three successive balls. In this connection a tale is told of a parent who asked his small Harrovian son if "F.C." was any relation to the great Cobden, and received the scandalised answer, "He *is* the great Cobden!"

At Harrow the cricket games are divided into Forms. The Sixth Form Game is made up of the best twenty-two boys in the School, from whom the School XI is subsequently selected to play at Lord's against Eton. The First Fifth Game is made up of the next best twenty-two boys, all of whom are in their House Elevens, and the Third Fifth Game comprises the third best twenty-two boys, and so on.

Of all the Harrow cricketers the 1st XI alone are allowed to wear white flannels, the school colours and speckled straw hats, and others who have been tried for the XI, corresponding approximately to a 2nd XI, are awarded their Sixth Form coats, of dark blue trimmed with white braid. The rest of the school wear plain blue flannel coats and grey trousers and the school cap. House Eleven caps are worn by as many



[*Sport and General.*

ANNUAL "GOOSE" MATCH BETWEEN OLD HARROVIANS AND THE SCHOOL.



[*Hills & Saunders, Harrow.*

A SCHOOL FOOTBALL XI.

members of the side as the House Captain awards them to. The " Cock House "generally awards it to the whole team.

In addition to the more important games, 2nd XI matches, in which no " cap " may take part, are played between the various Houses for the House Challenge Cup.

At certain times the Upper Ground is set aside for practice at the nets for the Eleven and the Sixth Form Game, and for fielding practice. On those occasions boys below the Remove have to fag, and these fags are managed by three or four boys, appointed for that purpose, who are known as " slave-drivers." A " slave " who holds a catch from the nets is released from duty for the rest of the day.

After the School matches main interest centres in the House matches, which are played on the " knock-out " system. As at football also, there is a separate " Cock House " competition for " Torpids," who are, roughly speaking, juniors under 16.

Alternative summer recreations are " the palmy sides of Ducker," the school swimming bath, about half a mile from the top of the Hill, on the opposite side to the cricket ground. Ducker is open all the summer and for the first two weeks of Christmas term. Here are held the inter-house swimming races, for which each house elects " ducks," who are over sixteen, and " ducklings," who are under that age, to compete for Cock House honours, as also at fives, racquets and " squash." Lawn tennis is played to some extent but not officially recognised.

Every Harrovian, unless certified medically unfit to do so, is required to swim a pass of seventy yards, and on the last Monday of term the aquatic sports are held. Lord Ebrington's challenge cups are awarded to the best diver and the best swimmer, and there are contests for racing, picking up eggs, to become " Dolphins," and for the Royal Humane Society medal.

Rifle-shooting, also, is popular at Harrow, but the " Goosematch," a cricket fixture played between the School XI and a team of Old Harrovians, on, or as near as possible to, Michaelmas Day, by which date most of the "XI" have left school, brings the summer pastimes to an end.

"Footer " proper begins immediately after the Goosematch and, formerly, was played throughout the Christmas term. The Harrow game is quite different from the Eton variety and the regulation Association game played at other schools, but is more akin to the latter. Rugby Football has now been adopted at Harrow for the winter term, and so Harrow Football is played in the spring term.

The Harrow game was invented by that famous master, Edward E. Bowen, to suit the peculiarities of the soil, the fields, which have but recently been scientifically and satisfactorily drained, becoming, aforetime, easily converted by rain into a sea of mud, in which Soccer was impossible. The game is played with a large, heavy ball, the shape of a much flattened globe, and was designed for a slow scrummaging game, in which passing the ball was a negligible quantity and backing up and following up (*vide* the words of " Forty Years On ") was paramount. The off-side rule is practically the same as in the Rugby game ; catching is allowed off a kick from below the knee, but not off a bounced ball. The catcher is given an unobstructed five yards—a " yard " being reckoned as a running stride—in which to take a free punt, or drop-kick ; or he may put the ball down and dribble. A base, or goal, consists of two upright poles with no cross-bar, and a base can be scored at any height above the ground, either by a kick off the ground or by a free kick from " yards," which latter can be taken by catching the ball, either off an opponent's kick, or off a

kick from one's own side, provided the catcher is on-side.

No other handling of the ball is allowed, except to make a fair catch for "yards," nor is there any handling or collaring of an opponent. The game is exceptional for complete absence of penalties, the only penalty being disgrace at "not playing the game."

The drainage improvement of recent years has greatly altered the character of Harrow football, by making it much faster and permitting of passing; but the game remains a magnificent one, as good, in fact, as any, but it is inconvenient after leaving school, because it is not played by anyone else. Like the Wall Game at Eton, however, it has to be seen to be properly appreciated and fully understood.

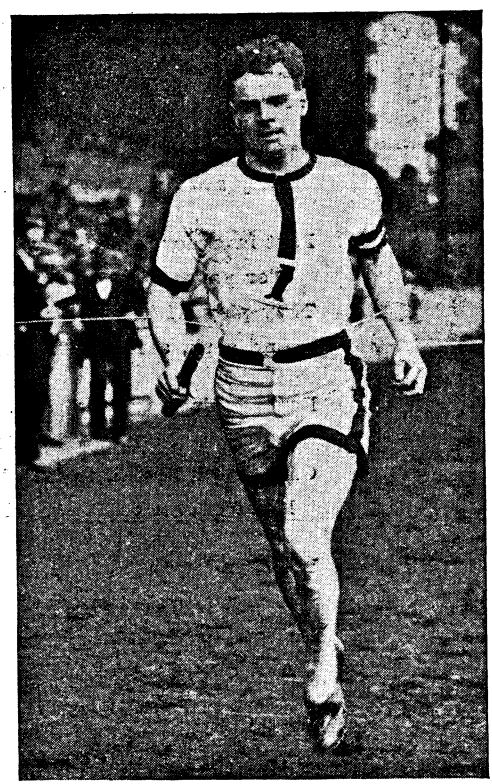
So far as the football futures of both Eton and Harrow are concerned, these seem to be tending quite definitely towards the adoption and development of the Rugby game, and should both, with their vast resources, develop real Rugby enthusiasm, the effects are bound to be very far-reaching. That Eton, at least, has not done so yet is indicated by the defeats they have suffered at the hands of Bedford, where the tradition for the game is at its highest.

Racquets and Fives, of course, are at their best at Harrow, as both present and past Harrovians have proved and are still proving. These, indeed, comprise the principal games of the Easter term, although the new cult of athletics is beginning to rival them in popularity.

So far as athletics proper are concerned, Harrow is particularly fortunate for a number of reasons. In the first place, it is one of the very few schools possessing a proper cinder track; the old-established match with Charterhouse has introduced the team spirit into a sport shied at by many head masters as being too individual; and, moreover, Harrow boys have given first-rate support to the Public Schools Challenge Cups Meeting, promoted annually in the Easter holidays by the London Athletic Club at Stamford Bridge Grounds, London, since 1890. At this meeting Harrovians have carried off individual challenge cups upon eleven occasions, and in 1917, when they beat Eton by a narrow margin, secured the Public Schools Challenge Cup, which is awarded to be held for one year by the School whose representatives score the greatest number of points in all the events. On that occasion G. M. Butler won the 100 and 440 yards and long jump, and A. B. Phelp took the hurdles title.

Among the most notable of their winners of the Public Schools Challenge Cups have been Guy M. Butler, just referred to, who gained his blue at Cambridge, became English quarter-mile champion, represented Great Britain at three Olympiads, and, finally, equalled world's record for 300 yards by running the distance in 30$\frac{3}{5}$ secs. Mention must be made also of R. J. Dickinson, whom I had the pleasure of coaching in the high jump in 1920. That year he won the Public Schools event and only just failed, in a downpour of rain, to eclipse the then existing record of 5 ft. 7$\frac{3}{4}$ in. Subsequently he gained two victories for Oxford against Cambridge, clearing 5 ft. 11 in. upon each occasion, and, in 1924, was picked to represent Great Britain at the Olympic Games.

Harrow is also one of those progressive schools which is not afraid to countenance



[*Sport and General*,

GUY M. BUTLER.

Harrow's greatest athletic son.

an innovation. In 1923 Oxford and Cambridge adopted the Pole Vault, and in 1925 this old English event was added to the Public Schools Challenge Cups programme. Harrow authorities stated that a competition would be instituted there as soon as a boy could accomplish 8 ft. This was done a year or so back by Ian Drew, and, incidentally, Captain E. F. Housden, M.C., M.A., 'a mathematical master at Harrow, is one of the finest exponents of the sport in England to-day. It is to be hoped, also, that Harrow will be among the first of the great schools, which number already Charterhouse and Malvern, to take up those excellent events, javelin and discus throwing, which are rapidly gaining such popularity in England.

One thing is certain, that Harrow is establishing great and definite athletic traditions, first at the Public Schools Challenge Cups Meeting, through the medium of present Harrovians; secondly, by the Old Harrovians who gain blues at Oxford and Cambridge; and, thirdly, by the Olympic successes of such sons of Harrow as G. M. Butler. But the best of their progressive policy is to be found in the example they are setting to lesser institutions by laying the foundations for Great Britain's international athletic successes "twenty, and thirty, and forty years on."

Further articles in this series will include RUGBY, WINCHESTER, SHREWSBURY, WESTMINSTER, CLIFTON, and others. Eton College was dealt with in our last issue.

BUTTERFLIES.

TRUTHS are the butterflies a poet may chase
Through beauty-haunted gardens of his mind,
But all too often in the anxious race
They are so swift, he is left far behind.

Past lavender, and poppy beds, they glide;
O'er paths worn smooth by poets who went before,
They play with him their fitful game of hide
And seek, settling one moment but to soar

Beyond his reach the next. His net of thought
He shakes, and waves again right in the way
Of Peacock proud, to find he has but caught
Little brown common things of everyday.

Yet does he not despair—for others tell
How truth eludes,—and persevering long
He catches Orange-tip and Tortoiseshell,
And out of these he makes a little song.

But O the greatest of his songs are those
He fashions from the gold-winged beauties rare
Which—as he gazes at the clouds—come close
And fly into his net all unaware.

PHYLLIS CLARK.

THE BICYCLE LAMP

By H. C. BAILEY

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

IT is a cherished conviction of Mr. Fortune that his mind is always governed by caution. This is not admitted by the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department. When Mr. Fortune's theories disturb the official tranquillity, he is apt to be facetious about the bicycle lamp of Police Constable Napper. Mr. Fortune is not amused.

He came into the case, which, as Lomas will tell you, never began to be a case, by way of Lord Clunk. They met first as judge and expert witness, and the clash was severe. But it produced a friendship which endures, a potent friendship, taking Reggie for week-ends to the country place where his lordship breeds pheasants which he cannot shoot and which Reggie would not shoot if he could.

Across the fire at Yardley House, Clunk gave a considered judgment that the charm of Clos Vougeot is rather that of claret than burgundy, and Reggie asked leave to appeal and drank his seltzer and went to bed. He remembered afterwards looking out on a dark sky in which the stars were clear. And the clocks struck midnight.

It was about this time that Isaac Smallpeice drove up from the village with the simple purpose of poaching Clunk's pheasants. This was not unusual. The lawful trade of Smallpeice was hawking pots and pans, brushes and brooms, which he took round the countryside in a decrepit motor van. But his night work was more respected. He was a poacher of high standing. The only covert of Clunk's which he had not worked that season was far away from the house, nestling in the eastern slopes of Yardley Down. That dark mass of sandstone and heather-clad sand is lonely in summer sunshine. You may climb about it by the hour and see neither house nor man, for the old homesteads of the ridge are hidden among the trees in the hollows, and only one bad, steep road crosses it. Smallpeice turned his car into a friendly farm track, put out the lights and went on afoot.

Through the dark of the winter night he saw with disgust a light moving on the road. He obliterated himself behind a patch of gorse. The light drew slowly nearer and he saw it came from a bicycle lamp. He made out the shape of the cyclist, a stiff way of riding, a policeman's uniform. After a little way the man turned and rode slowly down the hill again. The heart of Smallpeice was filled with profanity. It was his own village constable Napper, and plainly the man was bent on patrolling the bounds of the covert where he designed to work. He lay and made dumb oaths.

But not for long. A car whirred down the hill, a closed car driven fast. In its headlights the policeman stood out a moment, a sharp, black shape. Then he was gone in a crash and the car rushed on and away.

Smallpeice sucked his teeth. His first impulse may have been to give help. But he was a thoughtful man. It became clear to him that there would be a painful difficulty in explaining his assistance at a midnight disaster to a policeman in the neighbourhood of pheasants. He withdrew. Thus the bicycle and the body of Constable Napper were left lying in the road high on the eastern slopes of Yardley Down. . . .

Lord Clunk, who despises newspapers, reads them all and wants them early. When Reggie, dreamy and benign, wandered into the breakfast-room, he found the little man cursing his kidneys. "There, there," Reggie patted his shoulder: "be calm. This early rising excites the nerves. Take a sedative. Watch me eat. A comfortable sight. It has persuaded many saintly men all's right with the world." And he also ate kidneys. "Yes. The fault, dear Brutus, is not in the cook, but in curselves that we are out of sorts. The little system is to blame."

Clunk denied it with passion and champed

toast, and the butler came in: "If you please, my lord——" he was short of breath—"the boy with the papers——"

"Hang it, hasn't he brought them?"

"Yes, my lord. I have them, my lord. But the boy says he was delayed, having found a policeman lying dead on the road."

"Oh, my hat!" Reggie moaned.

"Confound the urchin," said Clunk. "What did he want to do that for?"

"He tried to revive the man, my lord, which he says he's a horrible sight. The lad is much shook up. He's come on here being the nearest place to get help. What would you wish to have done, my lord?"

"Good Heaven, man, telephone for the police and a doctor." Clunk started up. "Don't waste time chattering. I'll do it myself."

"Yes. Tell the police." Reggie poured himself another cup of coffee. "They like to know these little things. But I'm the nearest doctor, Clunk. My car, please."

Nature has not given Lord Clunk a sympathetic face. An aggrieved criminal once called him "old cod's head." It is too true. Reggie came into the hall to see the paper boy under examination, a sweating, gurgling boy who could not be clear where he found the policeman.

"Boy's a fool," Clunk's big mouth snapped. "Body's on the road somewhere between here and the station; anywhere in three miles."

"Oh yes. I expect he can find it. Come along, young man." Reggie got into his coat.

"Do I have to see him again, sir?" the boy gasped. "He's horrible."

"You've only to stop the car when we come to the place. There, sit by me. Which way is it?"

"Below the down, sir. Down in the marsh."

"He means at the bottom of the hill, in the flat on the west side." Clunk got into the car.

"Yes. I thought he did. Are you coming? Good! The judicial mind don't usually begin at the beginning."

"The judicial mind," said Clunk—and breath left him as Reggie whirled the car out of the lodge gates. "Ugh! The judicial mind does not usually receive the facts uncorrupted."

The car left the woodland behind and turned across bare flat country of sodden pastures. The boy's hand clutched at Reggie. "Yes, I see. All right. Just as you found him—what?" The boy nodded and gulped and turned away.

Reggie stopped the car. A bicycle and a body lay in the road, some distance apart. The front wheel of the bicycle was buckled. The body had suffered worse. It lay upon its face and its face was a crushed wound.

"Good Heavens!" Clunk put his hand to his eyes.

"Yes. As you say," Reggie murmured, and knelt down by the body.

"Did he suffer, Fortune?"

Reggie was moving the shattered head. "No, no! The first crash and then—nothing." He turned the body over and the light fell on what had been the man's face, and Clunk gave a groan. Reggie looked close, then sat back on his heels and surveyed the body, the bicycle, the road . . .

When at last he stood up, the round placidity of his face was disturbed. Then he wandered away to the bicycle. He bent over that, he lifted it and turned the buckled wheel, he peered into the lamp. His pathetic eyes turned this way and that, he drifted about the road.

"Well, well." He stood still and sighed. "Here's your uncorrupted facts, Clunk." Sad and inquiring and child-like, his eyes gazed at the little man. "What do you make of 'em?"

"I never saw death in the raw before," said Clunk. "I feel helpless."

"Not nice. No," Reggie murmured.

"The damage to the bicycle suggests a collision?"

"Oh yes. Something hit it."

"I suppose he was run down by a car?"

"It could be. Yes. Where would the car be going—on this road—in the middle of the night?"

Clunk gave him the geography of the road. It linked scattered hamlets and farms with the railway: it was the ancient track between one country town and another which now used the engineered highway on the other side of the down.

"Not a nice road," Reggie murmured, and looked along it with dreamy dislike. It was tarred but in bad condition, narrow and winding unreasonably. "The hypothetical car was driving fast."

Clunk put out his long upper lip. "It can be done, Fortune. You did it."

"Yes. I had something to hurry for. And I knew it was on this road. What was the hypothetical car doing?"

Clunk explained that cars sometimes came that way to avoid the high-road traffic.

"In the dead of night?" Reggie mumbled. "Yes. It could be." He turned away and again drifted about the road.

Two cars and an ambulance arrived. An inspector of police saluted Clunk. "Very good of your lordship to take so much trouble. We've lost no time." He saw the dead man's face. "My God!"

"No, no. I turned him over," Reggie murmured.

The inspector glowered at him. "Oh, did you! What do you want to meddle for? He didn't ought to have been touched."

"Inspector Brightman," Clunk rebuked him, "this is Mr. Fortune."

"How do you do?" said Reggie amiably.



"The heart of Smallpeice was filled with profanity. . . . He lay and made dumb oaths."

"Oh yes. Do you know him?" Reggie said.

The quiet voice at his elbow startled the inspector. He swung round and stared at Reggie's plaintive, inquiring face with disgust. "Know him?" he said thickly. "Of course I know him. But he wasn't ever found like that?"

"Good day, sir," the inspector growled. "You'll excuse me. I've got our own doctor here."

"You will be well advised to consult Mr. Fortune," Clunk frowned.

"Very good, my lord. I'll tell the Chief Constable what you say." The inspector sniffed. "He likes us to manage our own

business—as a rule." He bustled away, barking at his policemen. He conferred with them, he examined the bicycle, he dictated notes. He set them measuring distances from the bicycle to the body, from the bicycle to the side of the road.

Reggie watched him dreamily and sighed and turned to the doctor, a large, slow man who was breathing hard over the body. He made a tedious examination with pompous hum's and ha's. He rose and threw a chest and looked down at Reggie with condescension. "I suppose you've formed your opinion, Mr. Fortune?"

"Not yet, no," said Reggie meekly. "I'd like to be there when you do the post-mortem, if you don't mind."

"Oh, certainly. Honoured. I should say it's a plain case myself."

"What's that?" The inspector joined them. "You're finished, Dr. Lace?"

"You can remove the body, Brightman. The facts seem quite clear. The poor fellow has been dead some hours. The cause of death was injury to the brain from violent concussion. The probability is that the poor fellow was run down by a car."

"That's right, doctor," the inspector agreed heartily. "That fits. Napper went out on his bicycle last night; regular night round of his district; didn't come back this morning. And there he is—bicycle been in a smash, head smashed. Run down by some car that didn't stop. Road hogs."

"You know him, do you?" Reggie murmured.

"Know him?" The inspector stared. "Oh, you mean with that smashed face. It's Napper all right, poor chap." He turned to Clunk. "You know Napper, my lord, your constable at Yardley?"

"I thought it was Napper," Clunk nodded. "Poor fellow."

Reggie looked at them wistfully. "He'd be on this road, would he?"

"There's no fixed beat. He'd go anywhere in his district where he thought he might be useful. Quite all right for him to be here. It's a plain running-down case. As I make it out by my measurements, the collision was just there. Fast heavy car driving towards Oakhurst. I'm marking the place."

Reggie looked at him with melancholy wonder.

"Good." The doctor rubbed his hands. "Well, let them take the body on to the mortuary now. Perhaps you'll join me at your convenience, Mr. Fortune. You have your own car."

"Thanks very much," Reggie murmured. "Oh, inspector. Did you find anything on the road?"

"I did not, sir."

"No. You wouldn't. Only the bicycle."

The inspector snorted, and he and his men drove off with the bicycle and the body and the doctor.

"Nobody loves me, Clunk," said Reggie sadly.

"Two fools." Clunk thrust out his upper lip. "The fool in office is the curse of the world. I suppose you see something, Fortune?"

"No, no. It's what I don't see," Reggie murmured. He wandered forlorn about the road. "I don't see the glass of the lamp." He came back, he gazed at Clunk with large appealing eyes. "It isn't here."

"The glass of the lamp? Oh, the bicycle lamp."

"That's the one I mean," Reggie moaned.

"I take your point." The fish-like mouth of Clunk extended even further in a grin. "What do you propose to do?"

"Oh, I must look at this post-mortem. There's some other little things. Then I'll have to talk to the Chief Constable. Is he a nice man, Clunk?"

"I have not found him so. A mule. A military mule. My dear Fortune, I shall be happy to assist in dealing with the limited intelligence of Colonel Kitchell. I will go into Northam with you." His face made the motions of sucking which used to alarm the Bar.

When Reggie strolled into the mortuary at Northam he found Dr. Lace already at work. He did not interfere. In gentle silence he endured the doctor's demonstration of what had happened to skull and brain, and if he did not listen he watched keenly. But in the later stages of the lecture his attention wandered. He became interested in anything but the dead man's head: other parts of the body, the hands, the feet, the clothes and boots: and to the hands he returned with plaintive curiosity.

Dr. Lace completed his demonstration. "You will probably agree that is conclusive, Mr. Fortune. The injuries are such as would naturally be inflicted by the violent concussions resulting from collision with a fast car. You are satisfied?"

"Not satisfied, no. Several odd facts."

"I do not observe them, Mr. Fortune."

"No. I was afraid you didn't. For instance, I should say there was more than one injury to the head."

"That is certainly possible. But quite natural. His head may well have been struck by the car, then dashed to the ground. Several injuries are common in these cases."

"I have seen a few cases, you know." Reggie contemplated the doctor with half-shut eyes. "He's got all his injuries on the head. Otherwise quite intact. That's very unusual."

"In my small experience, Mr. Fortune," the doctor smiled, "every case is unusual. Each has its own features. I venture to point out this is particularly true of accidents. In their nature they are abnormal." He cleared his throat. "Is there anything else to which you wish to draw my attention?"

"Oh no," Reggie sighed. "No."

"Then if you will excuse me, I will go and make my report to the Chief Constable. Very happy to have had your assistance, Mr. Fortune." He bustled away.

But Reggie did not follow him. He lingered by the body, he lifted the right hand. It was well kept, but the longer fingers and the thumb bore stains in several colours. He turned, listened a moment, heard the doctor washing, and with silent quick movements found materials to make prints of the dead man's fingers. Then he also went to wash.

"I'll go round to the Chief Constable with you," he said cheerfully. "I fancy Clunk's there."

"Oh, really? Pleasure," said Dr. Lace.

Clunk was there. The appearance of the Chief Constable suggested severe strain. Nature had made him ruddy and full of face, he was empurpled and congested.

"Humph! Here you are, then," he growled at Dr. Lace. "What have you got to say about it?"

And the doctor said what he had said to Reggie.

"All right. Never mind the details. You're going to swear he was killed there on the road by collision with a car?"

Reggie turned to the doctor with polite surprise. "But are you?" he said.

"Don't interfere, sir," the Chief Constable roared. "Let the man speak for himself. Are you satisfied, doctor?"

"Completely. I have already pointed out to Mr. Fortune there can be no doubt of the cause of death."

"Well, well!" Reggie sighed. "And the place, doctor?"

"The place, Mr. Fortune?" Dr. Lace stared. "The place of death was obviously where the body was found."

"Oh no. No. That's where it obviously wasn't," Reggie murmured. "The one thing that is obvious."

"You amaze me——" the doctor protested.

"I should think so!" said the Chief Constable. "Now, Mr. Fortune, I'll deal with you, if you please. I don't know why you thrust yourself into the case——"

"We can't have this, Kitchell," Clunk snapped. "Mr. Fortune is the medical man who first saw the dead body. It's his duty to inform the police of what he found. If you take offence you expose your own incompetence."

"I'm not here to be lectured, my lord. When I want an expert from Scotland Yard I'll ask for him. Till then he has no right to meddle with my work."

"Why this passion?" said Reggie mildly.

"I don't want an expert coming here to make mysteries out of a perfectly plain case."

"Oh no. No. You only want a little common sense. Has Clunk told you about the bicycle lamp?"

"He's told me you couldn't find the broken glass, so you want to make out Napper was killed somewhere else."

"Good. You grasp the simple thought. What about it?"

"I attach no importance to it whatever," the Chief Constable announced.

"Oh, my hat!" Reggie murmured.

"Kitchell!" said Clunk, "endeavour to understand the position. Mr. Fortune will give evidence at the inquest——"

"Will he? The police won't call him, I can tell you."

"That will make your conduct still more suspicious," said Clunk with relish. "Mr. Fortune will state that the glass broken from the bicycle lamp was not on the road where he found the man. The police will at once be asked whether they have tried to discover where the accident occurred. If the answer is that the Chief Constable declined to investigate, it will be clear that you have done your best to conceal how the man met his death."

The Chief Constable spluttered. "You've no right to say a thing like that, my lord. One of my best men—killed in the execution of his duty too——"

"Oh! Oh, was he?" said Reggie quickly.

"Of course he was. Out on his night patrol. What do you suppose he was doing?"

"I don't suppose. I don't know anything about him. You said he was one of your best men?"

"So he was, sir. I've got his record here. Came to us out of the Army. He'd been through the war. Conduct in the Army first class. Recommended to us by Colonel Clairmont, his commanding officer. Absolutely clean sheet with us."

"Was he married?" said Reggie.

"No, sir; single man." The Chief Constable stared at him. "Most respectable fellow. You must have known him, my lord. He was in your village. No complaints, I believe?"

"I know nothing but good of him," said Clunk. "I consider that a reason for discovering how he was killed."

"Well, hang it, so do I," the Chief Constable cried. "But what the devil do you want me to do? This business about the lamp-glass—it's all fanciful. When a bicycle has been in a big smash, you can't expect to find bits of glass on the spot—might have been knocked anywhere—might have been smashed to powder."

"They must have been knocked somewhere," said Reggie mildly. "And they weren't there. In powder or otherwise. And it isn't only the glass. The lamp was burst and the oil had gone. But there was no oil on the road."

"That's a queer thing, I will say." The Chief Constable jerked back in his chair. "Oh, but look here:—his lamp might have burnt out. Then he'd have no light and that's how he was run down."

"Yes, yes. I was afraid you'd say that," Reggie sighed.

"I'm sure I only want to be reasonable," said the Chief Constable.

"Quite so," Dr. Lace smiled. "But Mr. Fortune doesn't like reason. He prefers his theories."

"My poor man." Reggie contemplated him with pity. "Oh, my poor man. What is my theory, please?"

"I really couldn't tell you," the doctor laughed.

"No, no. Because I haven't one. There's only been one theory. That's yours. Very comforting theory. But it don't fit the facts. You say the man was killed there by a car. But the facts state that he wasn't killed there and they don't say it was a car killed him."

"What?" the Chief Constable cried. "But that's the doctor's medical evidence—a car killed him."

"Not medical, no. Not really evidence. He was killed by severe blows to the head. Possibly by a car. Possibly otherwise."

"Well, what are you suggesting, then?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," said Reggie.

"I suppose you think you're being helpful, Mr. Fortune," the Chief Constable snorted. "It's more like making game of us."

"No. No. You don't amuse me," Reggie sighed. "I'm rather frightened of you."

"Of me, sir?"

"Of both of you. You're so anxious to hush it up."

"That is intolerable, Mr. Fortune!" the doctor cried.

"That's too bad," said the Chief Constable. "I keep asking what you suggest and you can't tell me. You only make difficulties."

"Not make 'em. No. The difficulties are there. You're tryin' to hide 'em."

"What on earth do you advise, then?"

"Oh, I should advise Dr. Lace to keep to the facts," said Reggie wearily. "I should advise you to look for some more. Look for the glass. Look for somebody who knew Napper well. Look for anybody else who's missing."

"Anybody else?" the Chief Constable gasped. "Nobody's missing at all."

Reggie stood up. "Well, well," he sighed, "you wouldn't know, would you? Good-bye."

He took Clunk away and put him into the car and drove off. The streets of Northam are full of country business. He drove in ample swoops, dreamily: in what Mrs. Fortune calls with a shudder his lyric manner. Clunk shuddered. It was not till a clear high road lay before them that he dared to speak. "Fortune, what did you mean by the last hint?"

Reggie moved in his seat. "I wanted to shake 'em up," he murmured. "I don't like 'em. These pompous fellows are dangerous. Always twistin' things to prove their own silly notions." He glanced at Clunk. "You know they're goin' to make an awful mess of this if they're left alone."

"No doubt," said Clunk. "You suggested somebody else was missing. Have you any reason to think so?"

"Not a reason. No. Only a guess or

so," Reggie mumbled. "Made 'em jump, didn't it?"

"I infer you have formed some theory of your own."

"Oh, Peter! Not me. Only several little questions. Why was anybody drivin' a car round your lonely lanes in the dead of night? Why did he want to make us think that man was killed where he wasn't? And what exactly was the place of Constable Napper in the scheme of things?"

"I should say Napper was thoroughly reliable: and a keen, vigorous fellow."

"Yes, yes. That's very interesting."

"You propose to go on investigating the case yourself?"

"I've got to." Reggie was plaintive. "A man's been killed. And your Chief Constable wants to muddle the evidence away. I've got to take it on. And it's all queer." He looked at Clunk with the pathetic eyes of a frightened child, and the car shaved a lorry.

"My dear Fortune." Clunk shuddered.

"Not a nice case. No," Reggie sighed. "Things are not what they seem. None of 'em. Well, well. That's Yardley, isn't it? We'll call at the desolate home of Constable Napper."

The car stopped and Clunk gasped relief. "Napper had no family, you know."

"No, no. That's one of the difficulties," Reggie murmured. "But we've called to ask after 'em. You ask, Clunk."

The door of the trim cottage was opened by a policeman who began to snub them, recognised Clunk, and saluted his lordship. "Are you in charge here? Just a word with you, then." They went into a neat kitchen and Clunk sat down and the policeman stood to attention. "I came to see if I could be of any service to Napper's family."

"Beg pardon, my lord, he had no family. Not as is known. He wasn't a Lamshire man. Colonel Clairmont brought him here. He never talked of having people. The inspector told me to search if there was letters from relations of his for to inform them of his death. But I can't find nothing of the sort. Only his Army papers and such."

"Lonely fellow," said Clunk. "Who kept house for him?"

"Nobody, my lord. He did for himself. Kep' the place nice too."

"Jolly little house," Reggie purred. "Jolly garden too. He wouldn't want to leave all this."

"Ah," said the policeman profoundly. "Poor chap. Cruel, sir, ain't it?"

"Yes, yes." Reggie wandered about the room. In its tidy comfort there was nothing personal but a few souvenirs of the war. "I suppose he just lived for this place?"

"That's right, sir. When he wasn't on duty you'd be sure to find him here. Generally working in his garden. He fair loved that."

"Good chap," Reggie smiled. "His one hobby—what?"

"Yes, that's right, sir. Just the garden—and the house, in a way. He didn't care about anything else. Why, he hasn't even got a wireless or a gramophone or nothing."

"The simple life," said Clunk. "A wise man." He looked at Reggie, who was drifting to the door. "Well, constable, if you should learn of any relations, let me know. Good day." And so they drove off. "You haven't made much of that, Fortune."

"Oh yes. Yes. Interestin' and suggestive."

"Entirely negative, wasn't it?"

"Quite. That's what's interesting." Reggie slowed the car. "Now then. Last night Constable Napper went out on his bicycle. That is the provisional hypothesis. Well, acceptin' that, where would he naturally go to?"

"To get to that road where he was found dead, the natural way is over the top of the down."

"Yes. Cuttin' out where the body was found—which way would he naturally go on a night patrol?"

"I should expect him to go round the coverts. Watching for poachers, you know. There are a lot of pheasants in a covert of mine on the down."

"Oh! Thus takin' him the same way as if he were goin' to where we found the body. Is that so?"

"Certainly. The coincidence is curious. I had not thought of it."

"Lots of things are curious," Reggie murmured. "Pheasants and poachers. I wonder." His round face was perplexed. "Well, well. Let's try it." And he murmured a verse:

"'When I was a greenhorn and young
And wanted to be and to do,
I bothered my brains about choosing my line
Till I found out the way that things go.'"

And the car went slower still up the narrow, steepening road. When they were a mile

or more from the village, when the tilled land ended in heather and wood, Reggie stopped. "Any more houses?" he asked.

"Nothing more on the road."

"Civilisation here ends. Yes. Now we'll look for things serious and particular." He ran the car on to the heather and they got out and walked on. "One of our prehistoric roads," Reggie complained. "Not much used by that curse of the modern world, the motor-car?"

"Very few cars come up here."

"No, no. I should say not. And that's very curious. The decease of Constable Napper is ascribed to a car. But the road where the body was found and the road which Constable Napper probably took are roads not adapted to cars: especially nocturnal cars."

"I admit your point," said Clunk. "But surely the damaged bicycle points to a collision?"

"Oh yes. I think the bicycle was in a collision. I should say there was a car. That's why I'm porin' over this rough and rocky road. But if you can tell me what that car was out for you would interest me, Clunk."

"A gang of poachers often work with a car nowadays."

Reggie moaned softly. They had come to the top of the down. He stopped and looked about him. A wide prospect opened beyond the brown heather, dim miles of field and hedgerow melting to a violet haze where the land rose into the sky. "Yes. Good and soothin' to the troubled soul," Reggie murmured. "Why are people, Clunk? The world's nice without 'em."

"My coverts are a little lower down," said Clunk.

Reggie sighed. "Well, well. The horrid fact of life intrudes." He directed his eyes to nearer things. "Hallo. Somebody does live here." He pointed to a wisp of blue smoke, a mellow roof coming out of the trees in a hollow.

"One or two old houses about. That's Clairmont's place."

"Oh!" Reggie's vague eyes turned to him. "The patron of Constable Napper. He lives up here. You didn't tell me that, Clunk."

"His house is not on the road. It didn't occur to me. An old place in its own grounds. My coverts are above on the side. You see?"

"Yes, yes." Reggie wandered on and they came to the place where Isaac Smallpeice had lain in hiding. Mr. Smallpeice had left few traces. The remnants of chewed tobacco by his lair in the bracken escaped Reggie's intent gaze searching the road. Some way lower down the yellow November sunlight glinted on the rough surface. "Ah!" Reggie stooped. . . . "Three pieces of a thick convex lens . . . once composin' the front glass of a bicycle. Thus verifyin' the provisional hypothesis." He wandered to and fro peering at the channelled sandstone of the road. "Yes. Further evidence—an oozy mess, which was oil—and a dry stain, probably blood. Observe these exhibits, Clunk. You may have to swear to 'em."

"I shall be equal to that." Clunk thrust out his lip. "The inference is that this is where Napper met his death. A very ingenious piece of work, Fortune. And annoying to Colonel Kitchell."

"Yes, yes. Assumin' the glass fits—this is where the cycle, with cyclist, crashed. No evidence how. The primeval road bears no traces of a car. But probably a car was present. Now, what was that car here for?"

Clunk pointed to the darkness of the covert. "My pheasants," he grinned unpleasantly. "This is just where a gang of poachers would come."

"Yes. It could be," Reggie sighed. "Well, well." He gazed at Clunk and his flushed face was mournful. "We shall have to tell these policemen," he complained.

"I shall be delighted." Clunk's lips made motions of sucking.

"Would you? Could you drive my car? Run along and take it and see if the glass fits, and if so bring the constabulary back with you."

"Very good. I was interested in the poor fellow's case before. Now it becomes a personal matter to catch these scoundrels. The man was practically killed in my service. I shall light a fire under Kitchell now." He trotted.

"Oh, my aunt," Reggie moaned. He sat down in the heather and contemplated with dislike the road and the covert. After a while he turned and looked across the slope of the down to the hollow from which rose the brown house of Colonel Clairmont. He rose and wandered over the heather till he came to the fence of its grounds. By the side of that he strolled on. The house was a comely piece of seventeenth-century work, in a severe and stiff garden. Beyond that lay a wilderness of shrubbery. As he made

the tour of the fence he saw among the bushes another building. That also was old; it seemed to have been a barn or stable; it had been put into service again with a new chimney and windows. But the windows were shut and blinds drawn, there was no sign of occupation. Reggie strolled on and saw in the heather some tiny scraps of burnt paper, little more than dust. His eyes opened wider; he glanced back at the building and turned and wandered over the heather in little expanding circles. He found one scrap of paper charred but not burnt, thin stiff paper on which was printed in brownish pink what looked like the naked legs of a child.

With great care he put that in his pocket-book. Slowly he moved away and, completing the circuit of Colonel Clairmont's grounds, came back to the road. Then he turned up the hill again and paused at the entry of the curving drive which led to the house and looked in and still more slowly climbed to the place of the mess of oil and the stain. There he sat down in the heather once more and lit a cigar and, as his uncanny way is at times of deeper thought, smoked with his eyes closed.

He was thus occupied when he heard footsteps. His eyes opened to see a man marching fast up the hill. "Don Quixote, I presume," were the words which came into his head, for the man was tall and lean and his gaunt face had a look of forlorn nobility. What he said was, "Good day, sir."

The man stopped and stared at him. "Good day to you. You have found a pleasant place to rest in."

"Yes. Large, long view. Peaceful for the spirit."

"I am glad you find it so." The man turned to gaze at the blue distance. "Do you know the down, sir?"

"No, no. I'm a little pilgrim and a stranger here. Same like the hymn says."

The man looked at him again. "Really? A pilgrim?" The lean, handsome face was bewildered.

"Really a stranger. Metaphorically a pilgrim. Seekin' the truth. A distressin' vocation, sir. Present job, waitin' for the police. Also distressin'. And not necessarily compatible with the other."

"I don't follow." The man seemed short of breath. "The police?"

"It is rather obscure, yes. But here they are." Clunk brought the car down the hill with extreme caution. "The judicial chauffeur. Majestic but tedious, m'lud. Trickle on." Out of the car came the Chief Constable.

"Hallo, Clairmont!" he stared. "Mr. Fortune brought you into it, has he?"

"Into what, Kitchell? I don't understand you. Is this—this gentleman a detective?"

"It's Mr. Fortune, the Scotland Yard expert. He's been looking into this case of poor Napper."

"Oh, really," said Clairmont. "But here—I don't understand. I was told the accident happened down in the marsh."

"That's where the body was found." The Chief Constable looked knowing.

"Do you remember hearing any noise last night, Clairmont?" said Clunk. "Some time after midnight, or even later?"

"I remember nothing," said Clairmont quickly. "What could I have heard?" He looked from one to the other. "You are very mysterious, gentlemen."

"Sorry, old man," the Chief Constable chuckled. "I have to be."

"Oh no. No," said Reggie. "Quite simple. Clunk thinks there were poachers after his pheasants here last night. And Napper met 'em."

Clairmont turned on Clunk. "Have you any reason to think so?"

"There is reason to think the man was killed here," said Clunk. "That is the obvious explanation. Did you hear any sound of violence?"

Reggie took Clairmont's arm. "Look. That's the oil from Napper's lamp. That's his blood. Did you hear anything?"

Clairmont did look. "His blood?" he said, and looked at Reggie. "How can you be sure?"

"That was blood," said Reggie quietly. "If he was smashed up by poachers, there must have been some sort of row. Did you hear anything?"

Clairmont could be seen thinking. "I heard nothing that I can recall, sir," he said at last. "I will ask my servants. If I should find that they have anything to tell, I'll inform you, Kitchell. As you know, I was much interested in Napper."

"Of course. Thanks very much," said the Chief Constable, and Clairmont saluted them gravely and marched away.

"Nothing doing there, I'm afraid. There's no reason why they should have heard anything away in Clairmont's house. Still, I'm inclined to accept your theory, Mr. Fortune. Very acute."

"I haven't a theory." Reggie was shrill.

"I only say the bicycle was smashed here."

"No doubt about that, is there? Those bits of glass fit his lamp. And there's the oil and his blood. He was killed here. That means poachers. They had a car. So they carried off the body and dumped him down in the marsh to cover their tracks."

"And if Fortune had not pointed that out to you, you would have arranged a verdict of accidental death." Clunk thrust out his lip. "Very efficient, Kitchell."

"I should have done no such thing, my lord. I should have looked for the car that killed him. I've still got to look for that car. Now I know it was used by poachers."

"Which simplifies the matter," said Clunk disagreeably.

Reggie looked from one to the other with pained surprise. "Does it? Was it?" he murmured plaintively. "You fellows are so quick." He fell on his knees and scraped the blood-stained sand on to paper.

"You want to test that?" the Chief Constable frowned.

"I want to test anything I can." He went to a case in his car and put the scrapings away and returned to work on the mess of oil.

"Not sure, eh?"

"Sure?" Reggie looked up. "Oh, my hat!" And he laughed and worked on.

"All right. When you're ready, I'd like to go back. I have to get to work."

Reggie took him back to Northam at a disintegrating speed and in the same style went on with Clunk. Uncertain about the knees, Clunk arrived in his hall and sat down and gasped for whisky and soda. "I want my tea," said Reggie plaintively. Clunk waggled his hand at the butler. "Weak tea," Reggie purred. "Oh, and could there be muffins?"

"Good Heavens," said Clunk with emotion, and absorbed his whisky. "I thought this maniac driving was caused by perturbation of mind."

"Maniac? My dear chap! Oh, my dear chap! I was driving with great self-control. I always do. Only you and the Chief Constable are in such a hurry and I like to be in the movement."

"You're not satisfied with the evidence?" Clunk looked at him keenly.

"The evidence is all right. What there is of it. It's the theories that frighten me."

"You don't believe there was a poachers' affray?"

"It could be. Yes. Speakin' strictly, I don't believe anything except the facts. And I don't understand them."

"You have your doubts about this blood?"

"No, no. It's goin' to be blood all right. Likewise lamp-oil. But I'll have to make tests. We want to have something proved."

"You have the lamp-glass. I saw that fitted into the lamp myself."

"Yes. That is certain," said Reggie. And the tea came. "Oh, buttered buns," he smiled. "Yes. Grateful and comfortin'. Yes, the glass came out of Napper's bicycle. But the blood—you see, I can't prove the blood came out of Napper. I'll only be able to say it's human."

"That will suffice, I take it."

"What for?" Reggie's eyebrows went up. "To prove Napper was killed there on the hill? Would you tell a jury that?"

"I should say it established a strong probability," said Clunk.

"My only aunt!" Reggie sighed. "And you were a judge—and a good judge too." He contemplated Clunk with melancholy curiosity. "A strange mind, the legal mind."

"You're an odd fellow, Fortune," Clunk frowned. "You were confident the man was killed somewhere else. Now you've found the evidence, and very ingeniously, you proceed to doubt it."

"No, no. I don't doubt the evidence. I always follow it. Follow the gleam. Same like the chap in the poem. But it don't lead me to anything."

"What more could you possibly expect?"

Reggie looked at him with dreamy eyes. "Well, you know, I did expect a little more interest in the matter from Colonel Clairmont."

"Clairmont? If he heard nothing, and he might very well have heard nothing, he could have nothing to tell us."

"Yes, yes. Acceptin' that—as he was the patron of Napper, when he heard that Napper was killed at his gate instead of miles away as announced, he might have been more interested."

"He was amazed."

"Yes. I thought he was surprised we'd got there. But he hadn't much to say."

"What should he say?" Clunk was annoyed. "My dear Fortune, if you have in your mind any suspicion of Clairmont, I can tell you it's preposterous. I know him

thoroughly. He's a man of the strictest honour."

"Yes. Yes. Fine type. I thought that. Do you know anything about his household?"

"His wife's dead. There's one son. A pleasant fellow. Some sort of artist. Etchings and woodcuts and that sort of thing. He's not at home now. A good deal away. Clairmont lives alone, with a few women servants and a gardener or so, all with him for many years. You can put the Clairmont household out of your mind."

"I see. Yes," Reggie murmured, and did so. For the rest of that evening he talked of Latin hymns and the charm of puddings and the ideal cat.

But in the morning he said that he must go and verify the blood, and he went to his laboratory by way of Scotland Yard. He drifted into the room of the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department, pink and dreamy, like a child just out of bed.

"Reginald!" said Lomas severely. "Shed that look of innocence. What have you been up to now? One of these days a chief constable will arrange your quiet decease. And I shan't blame him. This poor man in Lamshire don't know where he are."

"Well, well," Reggie beamed. "Has he found that out? Good."

"He has not. He blethers. Yesterday morning he rang me up very loud and frenzied to complain that you were meddling with one of his cases and he wouldn't have it. In the evening he was on the 'phone again to say he was devilish obliged to you. I am not. Why will you give chief constables fits? Very bad for trade."

"One of your larger cigars is indicated," said Reggie, and took it. "Yes. Heard all about it, Lomas?"

"Oh, lord, yes. And more," Lomas groaned. "What do you want here? It's going to be a straight case of a poachers' murder, isn't it?"

"I wonder." Reggie blew smoke-rings. He brought out the paper on which were the finger-prints of the dead man. "Tell your fellows to see if that chap is on their records."

Lomas gave the orders. "Who is the suspect?"

"He isn't exactly a suspect. He's the corpse."

"Good Gad!" Lomas gasped. "But the dead man is the village policeman. They all knew him."

"Yes. Identification unanimous though casual. But he hadn't got a face."

"My dear fellow, they must know the general look of the man."

"Oh yes. The dead man must be the same sort of size as Constable Napper. The clothes were a fair fit. He may be Napper. But I don't think so. It's his hands. The dead man had been doing things with acids and other chemicals. That's not usual in the police force. And Napper hadn't any hobbies."

"You mean hands like a photographer's?"

"Yes, yes. It could be."

"Another man—killed and put into Napper's clothes—why?"

"Oh, that's easy. So that his exit shouldn't be noticed."

"Someone wanted your supposed photographer put quietly out of the way? Then the someone must be Napper himself."

"Not must. Might. Napper either assisting or being otherwise disposed of."

"But why?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," Reggie murmured. His hand went to his pocket again. He produced the scrap of charred paper. "Does that suggest anything to the higher intelligence?"

Lomas looked at it with a reading-glass. "Bit of a plump, naked child, tawny pink complexion. Once part of a foreign bank-note, I suppose."

"Yes. Yes. Observe the letters *B.F.* Not meaning what you fear, Lomas. But Banque de France. I suppose you've got a bank-note expert on the premises. Ask him what he makes of it, will you?"

Lomas sent it away. Then he sat back and put up his eyeglass. "Always happy to oblige, Reginald. But isn't this rather a fairy-tale? You begin with a nice plain running-down case. Then by way of glass from a bicycle lamp, you turn it into a poachers' murder. Still unsatisfied, you want to make the victim somebody else because he has stained fingers. And finally you produce a scrap of a burnt French bank-note to prove heaven knows what."

"Yes, yes. I don't, anyway. Very perplexin' to the simple mind."

"I hate to hurt you," Lomas smiled. "But it sounds to me like a parody of your own methods. You always want to be subtle. You've done it this time. A masterpiece of the imagination."

"Oh, my Lomas!" Reggie was hurt. "How can you? Imagination! I never

did. I haven't any. And here! I'm just toiling timid after facts."

"What are you trying to prove?" said Lomas patiently.

"I'm not. I don't want to prove anything." Behind the cigar smoke his eyes were dark and vague. "It don't feel like that, you know. I'm only looking for the truth. Followin' the gleam. Same like Merlin in the poem. The light retreated, the landscape darkened——" He crooned verses.

"My dear fellow!" Lomas protested. "This is fantastic. Come out of dreamland. What has the burnt note to do with anything?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," Reggie beamed. "It don't make any sense. That's what's so interesting. The hypothetically defunct Napper had a patron. Military man like the late Don Quixote. Colonel Clairmont. Old Clunk says he's the soul of honour. And Clunk don't like his fellow-creatures too much. Clairmont lives on a primeval desert hill. And it was up there the bicycle smashed and the hypothetical poachers slew the hypothetical Napper. I went wanderin' round Clunk's grounds. There's a kind of empty cottage away from the house. Just by that somebody had been burning papers. Burnt fluff on the heather, the sort of stuff that flies up the chimney. And there was this bit of a note. Well? Apply the higher intelligence."

"As you say, it makes no sense. Your virtuous soldier had been burning papers and there happened to be a French note among them. A common kind of accident. What on earth do you want to read into it?"

"Nothing, dear. Nothing," Reggie beamed. "I'm quite peaceful myself. It's the kind of case that feels all right. Sort of finished." He patted his smoke. "Everything settled. If only the policemen would let it alone. But they mean to hang somebody. That's why I want the truth, Lomas."

"They won't hang anybody without evidence."

"Oh, Peter!" Reggie gasped. "What simple faith!"

An inspector came in and reported that the paper was certainly part of a hundred-franc note: the finger-prints were not on the register of criminals.

"There you are." Lomas tossed back the paper and the prints. "Nothing in it. You want a rest, Reginald."

"Yes, yes. You are exhaustin'." Reggie stood up. "I'm goin' to the laboratory. Effects have causes there."

But first he went to his club and wrote a letter to M. Dubois of the Sûreté in Paris, and that letter he registered.

In the morning he rang up Clunk and asked for the latest news from the battle front. "I have just been stimulating Kitchell," said Clunk. "The imbecile informs me that the police have a clue."

"Oh, my aunt!" Reggie groaned.

"I agree with you. Has anything come of your investigation?"

"No, no. Blood is blood and oil is oil. As expected. Clunk—don't hustle your police. Warn me quick if they do anything."

"Have no anxiety. Who can hustle a mule?"

"I am anxious," said Reggie. "If they do anything they'll do it wrong."

On the next morning came an answer from Paris:

DEAR FRIEND,—

Your two pieces much interest my colleagues. First, the morsel of scorched paper. It is from a counterfeit note of a hundred francs; a good forgery, but without doubt forged. Second, the finger-prints. They are of one known to us as Georges Bouchard who was arrested in 1920 for forging bonds. But evidence failed. He was not believed a Frenchman. You will understand that my colleagues will be greatly obliged if you can give information where he operates at present.

Always,
DUBOIS.

"No, I can't, old man," Reggie murmured, and lit a pipe and for a long time sat smoking. Then he sought the telephone again to ask Clunk if anything had happened.

"The unspeakable Kitchell still has a clue," said Clunk. "I prod him in vain."

"Don't prod." Reggie was shrill. "I told you not."

"My dear Fortune, if you have any fresh information which affects the case you should produce it. Otherwise these incompetents must be made to proceed on the plain evidence."

"It isn't plain," said Reggie. "It's all wrong."

The telephone made queer noises. "Do you propose to explain?" said Clunk.

"No, no. Better not."

"You accept a grave responsibility in attempting to impede the inquiry."

"I know. I've had lives in my hands before this, Clunk."

"The law must take its course." Clunk was angry. "If you act outside the law

I can be no party to it. You should know that."

"I do. That's why I tell you nothing. Except this. You're doing wrong, Clunk."

"We shall not understand each other," said Clunk, and rang off.

Reggie looked at the telephone with disgust. "Oh, you lawyer," he moaned.

It was on the next morning that Reggie saw in his paper the headlines: DEAD POLICEMAN—MAN DETAINED. The paragraph beneath contained no more news than that. He was already ordering his car when the Chief Constable telephoned to ask him to come down to Northam.

Once more he came into Colonel Kitchell's room, to see him in a state of inflammation and Clunk making mouths. "Well, well," he said wearily. "And what have you been doing now?"

"I don't seem to please his lordship whatever I do," said Kitchell. "I'd be glad of your opinion, Mr. Fortune. Look here. You're satisfied Napper was killed up there on the down by the covert? Is that right? You'd swear to that?"

"I said the observed facts prove Napper's bicycle had an accident there. That's all."

"Well, that's quite fair. That's all right. Then the only thing it points to is some poachers working the covert got at him. Do you agree to that?"

"It could be. It's the obvious inference. It's not proved, you know."

"Yes, I do know. But I've nothing else to work on. And his lordship has been at me all the time to do something. Now I've found evidence a notorious poacher in Yardley was out that night. A woman saw him take his car out just before midnight, a man heard him come back some time in the small hours. So I've detained Mr. Isaac Smallpeice."

"Oh yes. And what does he say about it?"

"He's not saying anything. He's an old hand."

"I see. Is that all the evidence?"

Clunk laughed disagreeably. "Well, Mr. Fortune, I ask you!" Kitchell said. "What sort of evidence can you get in a case like this? There's the circumstances, there's the motive, there's the opportunity: we've got all that fitting Smallpeice. You wouldn't expect any more."

"No, no. I don't," Reggie murmured.

"There you are!" Kitchell turned on Clunk. "The police can't make eye-witnesses of a crime. Very likely there weren't any—only old Smallpeice himself. I dare say the evidence isn't what you'd like, but it's no use badgering me. Now here's Mr. Fortune, he's been keen enough about the case and he knows what police work is. If there's anything more you can suggest, sir, I'll be happy to do it."

Reggie shook his head. "I don't see my way," he murmured.

"You have no suspicions, Fortune?" said Clunk sharply.

"Suspicions?" Reggie opened large innocent eyes. "My chap! Oh, my dear chap! We don't want suspicions."

"That's right," Kitchell agreed heartily. "Matter of evidence, isn't it, Mr. Fortune?"

"Yes. Yes. What are you going to do?"

"I should be very glad of your opinion, sir. You see, there is a case against this rascal Smallpeice. We can feel pretty sure he's guilty. But when it comes to a jury—what do you think?"

"Oh, my dear fellow!" Reggie smiled. "Don't ask me. Here's the judicial authority. How would you charge the jury, Clunk?"

"I should tell them there was no case," Clunk snapped. He thrust out his lip and glared at the Chief Constable. "None."

"Well, there you are," Kitchell said. "You see it yourself, my lord. It isn't my business to make evidence against the fellow. I tell you what I'll do, I'll detain him over the inquest to see if anything turns up. Will that satisfy you?"

"Don't talk of satisfying me, sir," Clunk barked. "If you have no case against the man you've no right to detain him. Good morning."

Reggie nodded to the infuriated Kitchell. "A gleam of reason," he smiled, and followed Clunk out into the street. "And that being that," he said sweetly, "were you going to ask me to lunch?"

Clunk did not answer. He was staring at a car from which descended the lean form of Colonel Clairmont. "Come to stir up the police, Clairmont?" he sneered. "Very necessary."

"Clunk!" Clairmont caught at his arm. "Is this true? They tell me a man's been arrested—that poor devil Smallpeice."

Clunk stared up at him. "Have you any objection?" he snapped.

"But there is no evidence, there can't be!"

"You shouldn't talk like that, you know," said Reggie gently.

"Certainly there is evidence." Clunk put out his lip. "The police would not detain a man without some cause. You are aware of that, Clairmont?" His face sharpened.

"But you don't want to argue about it here," said Reggie. "Colonel Clairmont, let's go home quiet. There's no danger to this chap now. It could all be managed."

"Managed!" Clairmont said tremulously.

"Who are you, sir? I remember. It is Mr. Fortune. I beg your pardon. I suppose you know everything."

"Perhaps I guess," said Reggie gravely. "Go back home, sir. We can talk there."

"My God!" Clairmont groaned. "Home!



Come then. Come, Clunk." He climbed into his car again and drove away.

"So this was your mystery." Clunk frowned at Reggie.

"You're playing with lives, Clunk,"

Reggie said in a low voice. "Be kind, man, be kind."

"I shall be just," Clunk snapped.

"God help you," said Reggie.

It is believed that never has he driven so slowly as in that procession behind Clairmont's little car. He has said that the drive lasted through wretched ages.

When they came to the house on the down, Clairmont stood at the door looking through the wintry sunlight at the woods and the mellow haze. He drew himself up and



"'I took one of the cursed stones he used in his trade and beat him down.'"

with studious courtesy brought them into his study. There he sat down at a writing-table and fumbled with papers.

"Clunk," he said. "I have no right to ask you to believe me. I give you my word I never intended this man Smallpeice should come into danger. Or any man. I did not think it possible."

"He isn't in danger, sir," said Reggie quickly. "Before you tell us anything, take that for certain. Clunk will tell you there is no evidence to convict him."

Clunk put out his lip. "I shall tell you no such thing, Clairmont. The man Smallpeice is under grave suspicion. The police believe him guilty."

"But they can't prove it. And they never will prove it," said Reggie sharply. "That is the state of the case, sir. It can end there."

"You have no right to say so," Clunk snapped. "Clairmont, you have no right to depend on that. If you know something which will clear him it is your duty to speak."

"I can't be silent," Clairmont said. "It's not in my mind. Mr. Fortune, I see you mean to serve me. I thank you, sir. But I mustn't rely upon you. This man Smallpeice is not to be in danger for my comfort. Clunk, I am content to leave myself to your judgment. Do as you think right. I will tell you the truth of the thing now. Smallpeice has done nothing, knows nothing. I hoped no one need ever know anything. It was not Napper who was killed. It was my son. I killed him."

"Do you know what you're saying?" Clunk cried.

Clairmont's gaunt face smiled. "Indeed I know. You may believe that. You thought Will was an artist, etching, making woodcuts and lithographs. So did I. You know he had the cottage made into a studio. What he did in it was forgery: forgery of foreign notes. I found that out only last month while he was away. I waited for him to come back. He came at night. Napper was out on the road watching your coverts, Clunk. Will's car ran him down. Will did not stop. That was like him. He came on to the studio. But I heard. I was there to meet him. I told him what I knew and he laughed at me and I struck him—there in the studio. You think I am mad? He told me it was a good trade and he was going on with it. I took one of the cursed stones he used in his trade and beat him down and killed him. What else could I do? The son of my blood, the last of us giving himself to that! Then Napper came."

"You mean Napper hadn't been hurt?" Clunk frowned.

"Napper's hands were cut and his head. When he picked himself up he followed the car and he found us. And then I had to tell him. He has known me twenty years. He has known Will since he was a boy. He was ready to help. And it came to him—it came to me, how we could hide it all. We changed their clothes. Napper said the face shouldn't be known." Clairmont stopped and shuddered and looked at them. "Napper took him away in the car, and I burnt all his forgeries. We thought the thing would end with people believing the body was Napper killed by an accident in the road and so the truth could be hidden and no one suffer. Now——"

"Now!" said Clunk sharply. "Where is this man Napper gone?"

"He is gone where I shall not tell you." Clairmont lifted his head. "What he did, he did under my orders. You cannot wish to punish him, Clunk."

"It is not a question of what I should wish. It's a matter for the law. You know what you have done. You confess murder and say Napper is guilty as an accessory."

"He is guilty of nothing," Clairmont said. "It is I. And I have done right. Will is better dead than living so. I hoped to conceal the disgrace." He looked at Clunk with tragic eyes. "I hoped our name would end clean. Have I failed, Clunk?"

"Good God, man, you don't suppose I can keep this secret!" Clunk cried. "There's such a thing as justice, Clairmont."

"Very well." Clairmont rose wearily. "You will do what you think right. I bid you good day, gentlemen." Reggie held out his hand. Clairmont took it in a firm grasp. "You have been kind, sir. Let it be as it is."

"I advise you to send for your lawyer without delay," said Clunk.

And Clairmont laughed.

Clunk walked briskly to the car. Reggie was some time after him. He started the car and drove slowly up the winding drive, stopped at the turn to the road. A shot rang out.

"Ah." He turned and looked at Clunk. "And that is that. Are you happy now?"

"What do you mean?" Clunk was disturbed. "What is it?"

"He's shot himself. You told him to."

"God forgive him," Clunk muttered.

"Yes, yes. That's all right. God forgive you."

Clunk scrambled out of the car and ran back to the house.

When Reggie came into the room again the servants were there huddled together and Clunk bent shaking over the chair by the table.

Clairmont had sunk limp into it and blood ran down his haggard, scorched face. An old army revolver lay in his hand upon his knee. Clunk's tremulous little hands fumbled about him.

"What can you do?" Reggie said, and brushed the little man away. . . . "Yes. He made sure, Clunk." And then to the sobbing servants: "Your master is dead. Go away and be quiet, like good souls. I'll do what has to be done." He got them out of the room. He turned calm and grim to face Clunk. "Well. You've had your way with him," he said.

"Good God, Fortune, don't take it so," Clunk said hoarsely. "The man was my friend."

"You remember that now. Yes. And you condemned him to death."

"Do you hold me to blame? I never thought of this. I did not judge him."

"No. You said he must stand his trial. Well, he's gone to it. And you won't be the judge. He killed his son to stop him from crime. And you killed him for the honour of the law. It hurts, doesn't it? He was your friend. Think how he was hurt. Oh, I don't judge you. Perhaps it was the best way. There was no life for him. But this is going to be the end. The thing stops here, Clunk."

"How can it?" Clunk groaned. "We must report his confession. This man that's arrested——"

"He's in no danger. You know that. You always knew it. There's no evidence against him. There's not going to be evidence against Clairmont. He shall leave his name clean."

"I can't conceal the truth. I must tell his story."

"Oh no, you mustn't. You've hurt him enough in life. If you try to tell anything I shall see to it you're not believed."

"What do you mean?"

"Listen." Reggie took up the telephone. "Police station at Northam, please. The Chief Constable. Is that Colonel Kitchell? Fortune speaking. From Colonel Clairmont's house. There's been a tragic affair here. Clunk and I found Clairmont in Northam in great agitation. We persuaded him to go home and went with him. It was clear poor Napper's death has been weighing on his mind. He talked wildly about it. Yes, quite incoherent. He had pathetic delusions. Napper wasn't really killed, that sort of thing. I tried to soothe him and put him right. We were just driving away when we heard a shot. The poor chap's killed himself. Very sad, yes. Good fellow. You'll come out yourself? Thanks very much. I'll be here. I'm sending Clunk home. He's broken down. Of course, Clairmont was an old friend of his. It hits him. Quite. Thanks." He turned to Clunk. "Colonel Kitchell sends his condolences. You'd better go now. Goodbye."

Clunk stared at him. The fish-like mouth quivered. He looked about the room and saw Clairmont and hurried away.

And Reggie, too, looked at Clairmont. "The end, sir." He lifted his hand in salute. His eyes were dim.

COLD YOU MAY COME.

COLD you may come,
Warm you shall go
Poor you may come,
But stay not so.

For cold and poor
Are only they
Who bar the door
On Christmas Day.

EISDELL E. TUCKER.

MODERN—THAT'S ME!

By MARGERY SHARP

ILLUSTRATED BY A. C. DANN

IT was pale tulip yellow, with a narrow curving brim that drooped down over the left eyebrow and then curled back to show the sweep of straight black hair; there were very few people who could wear a hat like that, especially without make-up. Virginia pulled it down a little farther over the eyebrow and considered her reflection: dark grey suit, tailored to a dinner-jacket perfection, narrow skirt cut short above slim grey legs, narrow coat cut away to show the pale yellow, deep-pointed waistcoat, enormous yellow carnation in its twist of silver paper. There was also a face under the hat, small and delicately powdered. It was all extremely modern and satisfactory, and she was meeting one young man for lunch and another for tea, and that was quite modern and satisfactory too.

ALL the way in the 'bus Virginia thought about Jimmy, turning him over and over in her mind in the hope of discovering something new about him. He was young, he was a doctor, he was in love with her: he would probably always have enough to live on, and was often entertaining; nor did he look as though he would run to fat in the early forties. Once, when she had met him unexpectedly, Virginia's heart had given a little pounding thump that had filled her with pleased amusement; and while her designs were selling fairly easily at the moment, one could never tell the way taste was going to jump. Whereas Jimmy was quite monotonous in his constancy. She knew exactly how he would look waiting for her, standing with his feet a little apart in an attitude of resigned contemplation: an attitude he had cultivated because he so disliked the average fidgety self-consciousness of the expectant male. Virginia loved to see him like that, grim and forbearing as though awaiting the arrival of a disagreeable aunt; he always looked so surprised to see her, and so did any other people who happened to be there. To-day he looked even more wooden than usual, so she was probably late.

"Hello, Jimmy."

His face changed ever so slightly, and she knew his heart had thudded as hers had once.

"We've got a table by the window," he said, "upstairs." That was all, but their eyes smiled at each other. There was a mirror in the lift, and they both looked at Virginia's reflection, while she informed him that she was appallingly hungry and would need mountains of salad before becoming intelligent.

The waiter understood perfectly, and while Jimmy ordered lunch she took off her gloves (not grey, because after all one doesn't want to look like an actress), and watched him do it. He was really extremely presentable, she thought, with his nice beaky nose and quiet voice: quite different from Dan, whose casual bohemianism had nevertheless something very attractive about it. . . .

"You've got a new hat," he said gravely, when he had finished. He was inordinately proud of his capacity to remark new clothes, and had just found out that he might exercise it without being unmannerly.

Virginia smiled at him.

"Intelligent Jimmy. Do you like it?"

"Very much. It's the colour of canaries."

"Tulips," she corrected gently.

"Tulips then. It suits you."

He looked at her carefully all the while the waiter served their mayonnaise, so that Virginia found it expedient to plunge back into millinery.

"I like it better than the black one, I think. It's more—more June."

This was beyond Jimmy, for all his intelligence.

"I like all the things you wear," he told her. "I can't imagine you not looking perfect."

But that wasn't what Virginia wanted.

"You don't like them just because I

wear them?" she objected. "You can't like them all equally well just because—well, it's me?"

"But I do," he assured her. "I should have thought you'd have been flattered. Wouldn't you rather I liked your clothes because of you than you because of your clothes?"

"Yes, of course—but there are distinctions. To like everything I wear just because you happen to like me—it's so . . . so undiscriminating."

"I discriminated once and for all," said Jimmy steadily, "when I fell in love with you; but loving anyone as much as I do isn't good for the critical faculty."

Virginia put down her fork and sat back aghast. She had managed things terribly badly, and here he was well in the middle of it when she had meant to stave off all—all definitions till the cigarettes at least. It was dreadful, this large, conspicuous declaration dumped in her lap like an untidy parcel, all in the midst of that debonair assembly. She tried desperately to pretend it wasn't there, to push it off, to go on talking vanities.

"But you must like some better than others," she persisted, a little uncertainly. "The blue, for instance . . ."

"When anyone's just proposed to you," interrupted Jimmy, "you mustn't talk about hats. It isn't polite." His voice was quiet and humorous, almost ironical; and Virginia was alarmed to find an empty despairing feeling rising under her heart. In the 'bus she had quite definitely wanted him to propose to her, had even considered the opening she would give him, just after the coffee was poured out; and now when it had come she found she didn't want it after all, that everything was going wrong, that she would never be able to say 'Hello, Jimmy,' again without a tiny prick of compunction, as though she had done something rather mean.

"You see," he was saying, "I've no idea how I stand with you. Sometimes I think you—you want me to love you, and sometimes you seem miles off where I can't get near enough to touch you. But now when I know that you're the most important thing in the world——"

"Don't Jimmy, please." Whatever happened, he mustn't be allowed to give himself away like this. "You don't know what a little hound I am, really, Jimmy. You're so much nicer than I am that you can't see it—you're so perfectly straight and honest that you can't possibly understand anyone so—so involved as me."

"I know you like to show off your adorable vices, if that's what you mean; but that's simply because you're so absurdly young." He smiled at her with such fond defencelessness that she felt vexed and old enough to be his mother.

"You think I pretend to be hard and selfish and superficial," she said, "because it's the fashion, and because I'm silly enough to want to be depraved. But it isn't that at all. I really am like that, if you'd only see it, and I don't try to hide it, so that people think it's all put on. It's the double bluff, my dear, and it's worked so well that the only time I'm honest with you you don't believe me; I even have a faint sneaking hope that you won't. I'm all the rotten things people mean when they say 'modern,' with one or two extras left over from Tennyson."

"I know you try to be," said Jimmy, "but it doesn't come off. The real you—the one I love—keeps on coming out."

"I know," said Virginia miserably. "I do that part rather well."

The waiter was quite distressed to find that they had not appreciated their salmon, deplored the heat that made madame so pale, and suggested a little fruit. Virginia thought she would like a peach, perhaps. One has to look at a peach to peel it.

It was a beautiful peach; the skin, velvety and faintly warm to the fingers, slid smoothly off under the knife: its rosy heart came away cleanly from the big pitted stone. Virginia admired it absently. She knew that Jimmy's attitude was subtly changed: he was looking at once less unhappy and more concerned. It was dreadful to begin it all again, but her sudden honesty was still on her, and she couldn't let things slip back now.

"Jimmy," she said abruptly, "it isn't the heat."

"I'm not so sure," said Jimmy. "I'm feeling it if you're not. Would you like the sun-blind down?" He was trying to sheer off now, just as she had done, but Virginia was determined.

"Please, Jimmy," she said, "will you understand that I mean everything I've been saying? I really am being straight with you this time. You're much too nice for me, really. I'm just a beastly, selfish little—experimentalist." In the flush of her new-found honesty she had been about to say 'flirt,' but a sudden instinct of self-

preservation stopped her in time; it was a little too accurate. She looked at Jimmy anxiously, wondering what he was thinking of her; it would be too dreadful if he stopped liking her altogether, as she was doing her best to make him. It had been a beastly meal, all muddled and disturbing, and she couldn't see where it was going to end.

a little. It was horribly unmodern to take things seriously.

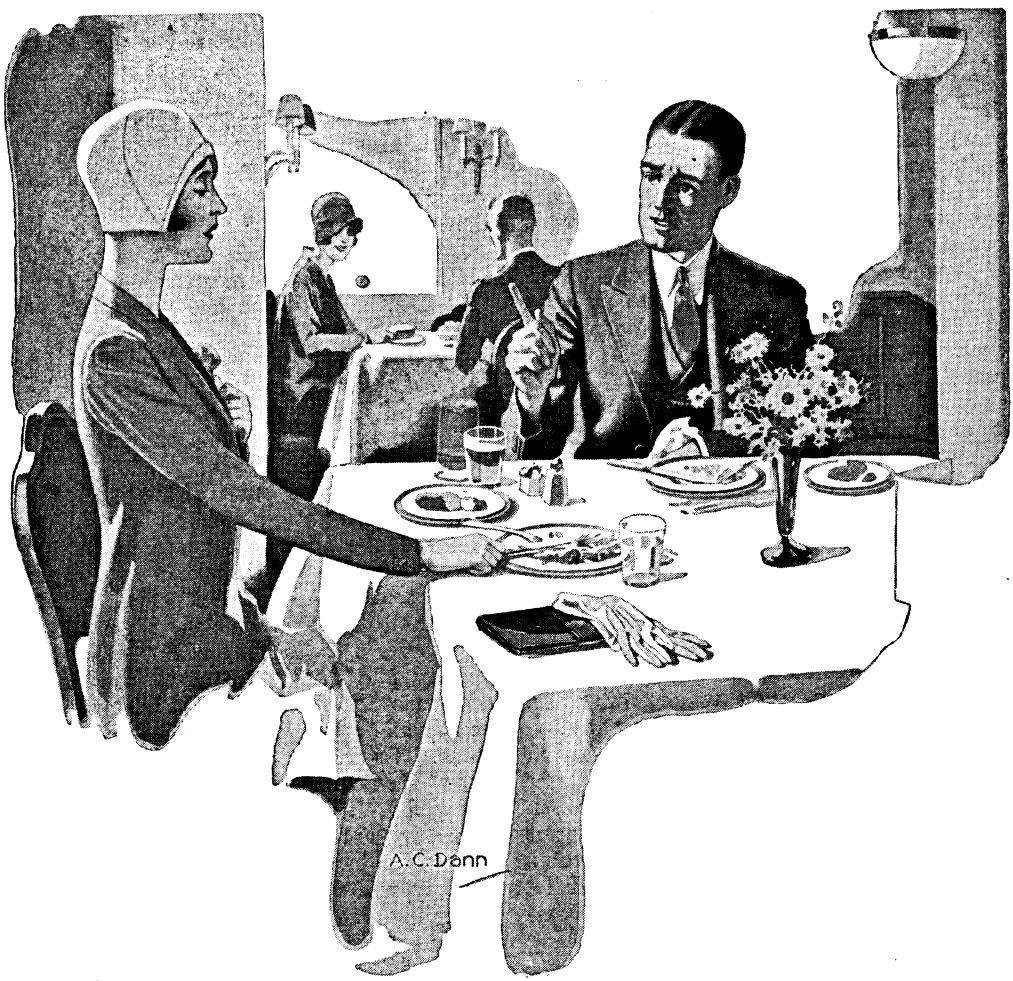
"Cut it," said Jimmy.

"I can't, really."

Jimmy shrugged.

"That means you don't want to. What about the Park?"

Virginia thought swiftly. It was now



"'When anyone's just proposed to you,' interrupted Jimmy, 'you mustn't talk about hats. It isn't polite.'"

Why didn't Jimmy take things in hand and do something?

"Look here," he said, "we can't talk here—they keep on bringing things. Let's get out and go to the Park or somewhere and see if we can't put ourselves straight. Or would you like to go right out into the country?"

"I can't," said Virginia, "I'm going out to tea." The thought of Dan steadied her just on two, and she was meeting Dan at four. That meant an hour and a half, perhaps, of this terribly difficult conversation. It was dreadful to have to say things that really meant something, that had an effect on people's lives, instead of merely being amusing. . . .

"Very well then," said Jimmy abruptly. "Good-bye."

It was pure instinct that pushed Virginia to her feet to keep him.

"I think I'd like the Park," she said.

There was another couple in the lift going down, and they both looked at the tulip-coloured hat. Virginia managed to powder her nose without Jimmy's noticing.

THERE were few people in Hyde Park, and the green emptiness of it filled Virginia with dismay. Here indeed was the one spot in London in which one could lay bare one's heart, and she was not sure that she had one. Jimmy was going to want explanations, endless, exhausting; he would tell her how much better he knew her than she did herself, draw a lovely idealised portrait that would fill her with unhappy, half-cynical amusement. If only, thought Virginia desperately, she were either nice enough to fall wholeheartedly in love with the man, or detached and modern enough to enjoy being made love to without any of these pangs of conscience. . . . It wasn't fair to let Jimmy go on like this when she didn't love him, and he would want to know why. Virginia looked at him sideways from under the yellow brim, rebuking herself for such insensitiveness; then looked away again, waiting for him to begin, and praying for an interruption. About twenty yards away was a slim strolling figure who might possibly develop into Brian: she quickened her pace a little, wondering whether he would recognise her at that distance—he had never seen the yellow hat before. Jimmy knew him, of course, but then Jimmy was in a mood to cut everyone dead and walk on over their bodies. If only she could wave to him! They were so near now that she could see his face quite clearly; it was Brian all right, and he was certainly looking their way. Virginia made a tiny beckoning motion of her head, a tacit recognition and invitation all in one. Brian hesitated an instant, glanced at Jimmy's wooden face, and came forward to meet them.

"Virginia, by all that's beautiful!" he said. "You look so like a tulip that I thought you were growing. Hello, Jimmy!"

"On the contrary," said Virginia, "we're walking. It's a very nice park to-day, don't you think?"

"Lovely," agreed Brian. "May I join you and help point out the beauties?"

"We'd love you to," said Virginia quickly. "Let's go through to the Gardens and admire Peter Pan. Or do you prefer the Round Pond, Jimmy?"

"Oh, Brian shall choose," said Jimmy grimly; and with that they strolled on over the thick grass.

Walking along between the two men Virginia felt her spirits begin to rise. Brian was playing up beautifully, flipping back her shuttlecocks with every sign of enjoyment; she could tell he was a little puzzled, and more than a little amused, by Jimmy's grim disapproval; but it would take more than that to freeze Brian out. They talked books and theatre and made malicious fun of the manager who had been rash enough to give Brian a small part, all in the best modern vein of anxious flippancy. Virginia was being amusing, splashing about delicately in the shallow waters where her kind belonged. Every now and then she brought Jimmy into the conversation, deliberately, like a good hostess with a difficult guest. He did not respond quite so well as he might have.

They made their way slowly up to the Round Pond and sat there in the sun, watching the boats and being entertaining about the people. Virginia adored them all, the elderly yachtsmen with their high rubber boots, the small cockney cherubim rolling in the grass, the elder sisters in charge of prams. She would make a magazine cover out of it, she said, all tumbling yellow silhouettes on a grey-green ground, with a frieze of sea-gulls weaving through the lettering. Brian rhapsodised over the wealth and variety of the London type, and likened the Gardens to a Phil May album. They were terribly bright.

Presently a band of Wolf Cubs trotted across the turf, tightly-jerseyed and gambolling like so many puppies. There was a sort of superior Girl Guide in charge of them, a young woman with a pleasant red face and useful ankles. Virginia looked at her with a mixture of dismay and admiration: she was so very neat, so absolutely guiltless of all coquetry, and her face was so unusually kind. . . . Virginia turned suddenly to Jimmy.

"That's the sort of woman you ought to marry," she said softly.

Jimmy considered the matter.

"I think you're right," he said. "I ought to marry her at once and become a scoutmaster. So useful for the First Aid stuff. Do you know you're behaving abominably, Virginia?"

To her extreme displeasure Virginia flushed.

"Oh, I know I am, Jimmy," she whispered, "but I'm frightfully miserable inside." And at the moment she was looked round cautiously, but he had gone off into a daydream for the benefit of the Cub girl. "I've told you I can't. I've got to go now, anyway. Oh, Jimmy, don't mind so much about it!"



"'Virginia, by all that's beautiful!' he said. 'You look so like a tulip that I thought you were growing. Hello, Jimmy!'"

indeed, for he looked more hurt than was altogether reassuring.

"Then get rid of this young fool and come and have tea with me."

"Jimmy!" He had spoken quite loudly, and Brian might have heard. Virginia

"I'll come and get you a taxi."

"No, please don't. I'd rather be by myself."

"When shall I see you again?"

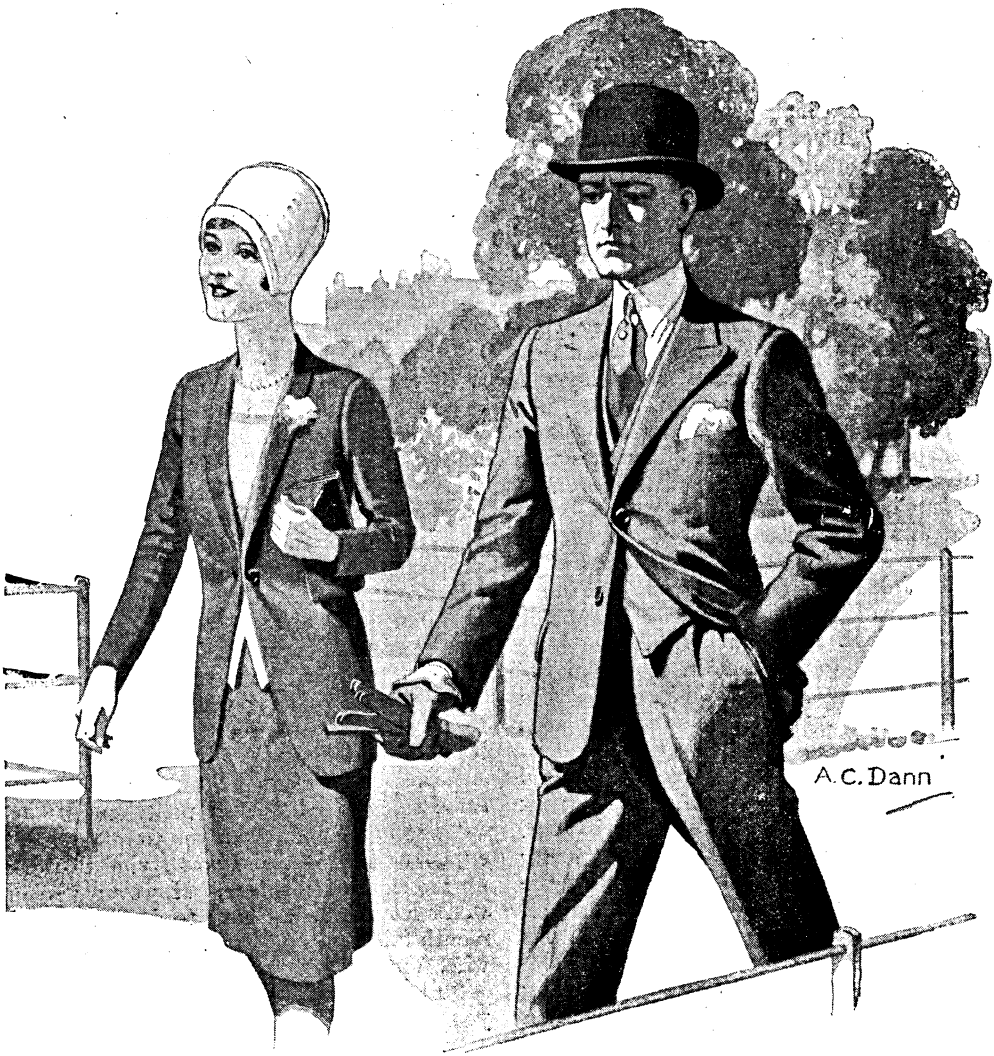
"Sometime—I don't know. 'Phone me up at the flat." Virginia got up swiftly

and pulled on her gloves. "So long, Brian. See you sometime!"

"Oh, I say, are you going?" Brian jumped to his feet and proposed tea. She explained that she had an engagement and was going to take a taxi, and that she could really find her way out of the Park with perfect ease.

"Stay here and talk to Jimmy," she commanded (and asking herself even as she did so what imp of devilry lay under her tongue). "He's the sort of person you ought to cultivate. Good-bye, children."

And she walked away under the trees, slim and debonair as one of her own lovely ladies, resisting, with commendable firmness, the temptation to turn back and see what they were doing.



DAN. Grey flannels, indeterminate pullover, a bright smear of paint on his right cuff—Dan taking a lady to tea at Rumpelmayer's! Virginia led the way into the shop divided between amusement and annoyance. It was so perfectly characteristic of him, this sublime unselfconsciousness, but he really wasn't quite good-looking enough to carry it off. He had chosen Rumpelmayer's, she knew, out of a desire to do her honour and because he had heard you got good teas there; but it would never have occurred to him to change his coat. She felt sure people were looking at them.

"I haven't had any lunch," he announced cheerfully. "Do you think they could give me eggs or something?" At the next table a chair scraped, and Virginia could feel an amused glance in the small of her back.

"You could try," she suggested. "I should think it would take more than that to scandalise the waitress." Her voice wasn't quite convincing, but Dan didn't notice, and tackled the waitress with his usual appealing inefficiency. The dialogue, Virginia felt, must be audible in St. James's Street. No, they didn't usually serve eggs there; no, nor ham. Yes, he could have sandwiches: certainly, sir, quite substantial sandwiches, and cakes. And China tea. She was quite polite, but faintly uninterested, and once again Virginia felt that it hadn't quite come off. You had to carry your bohemianism with more of an air than that if you wanted to impress Rumpelmayer's.

"You look very complete," Dan was saying. "I like the hat. It's the colour of tulips—those long, slim yellow ones that look ready to fly chirruping off their stems."

"Intelligent Dan." That was probably what Jimmy had meant when he called it canary. Poor Jimmy!

"I think I'll paint you in that suit sometime, and call it 'After Whistler' or something equally banal. Hello, food! Eat a huge tea, Virginia, to keep me in countenance."

"As a matter of fact," said Virginia, "I'm not frightfully hungry. I ate an enormous lunch." She wasn't sure why she had to lie, but Dan was annoying her. She poured out his tea daintily, watching him attack the sandwiches with undisguised fervour. His collar was quite clean, but torn under the tie, and Virginia wondered why the frayed slit aroused no maternal instinct. She would have hated to overhaul his wardrobe.

"I say," said Dan suddenly, leaning forward among the china, "I must look an awful tramp. Do you mind?"

"But of course not!" protested Virginia. "There's hardly any paint on your coat, really, Dan."

"No, seriously. I never thought of changing till I saw you come along so fine and grand. You're sure it doesn't worry you?"

"Dan, you're being silly." Virginia speared an éclair and conveyed it to her plate in absorbed silence. Why on earth couldn't she just say to him, "Look here, Dan, I like you very much, but I do wish you wouldn't take me to Rumpelmayer's looking like a dustman. I know it's very silly of me, and I don't suppose people look at us half so much as I imagine they do, but there we are!"? He wouldn't mind, and then the next time she wouldn't have to reason herself out of her discomfort.

"But you would tell me, wouldn't you?" he persisted. "I should hate to feel you disapproved of me and were too polite to say so."

"My dear Dan, I don't choose my friends for their coats. Besides—I know *I'm* all right."

Dan laughed.

"You conceited little devil! But you're perfectly correct. I say, Virginia—I am one of your friends, aren't I?"

"Of course you are, and you know it. Don't fish, Dan."

"I'm not fishing. Be serious a minute, Virginia. You never give me a chance."

She looked at him in dismay. He had quite a Jimmy look about him, all earnest and stiff—the 'doglike devotion of a lifetime' look. Really, Virginia felt, if he were going to get intense as well she couldn't bear it. It was preposterous, this habit of proposing at meals, when one couldn't get away without creating a scene.

"Dan dear, *please* don't get argumentative over tea. There isn't room. Besides, I want to hear about the new picture."

"You don't really, you're simply trying to divert my attention. Really, Virginia, it's a bit late now."

"Do you think we're talking about the same thing?" she asked politely.

"I'm just going to ask you to marry me," explained Dan, "and I was trying to work up the right atmosphere. However, as you won't let me, I shall have to do it with my mouth full of walnut cake. Will you be my wife, Virginia?"

"Please don't, Dan! I—I'd much rather you didn't!"

"Oh?" Dan looked at her very straightly, and grinned a little. "That's funny. I thought you'd like it."

"Dan!" For the second time that day Virginia flushed.

"Oh, well, perhaps you don't at this minute, but at one time I thought—well, I thought you wouldn't mind my asking, anyway."

"I don't—at least—Oh, Dan, can't you see what I mean? I don't want to be proposed to. It makes me feel such a hound!"

Dan put his head down suddenly and kissed her hand where it rested on the edge of the table. Virginia glanced quickly to right and left, but their neighbours were gone and the waitress wasn't looking. (And how beastly, she thought, not to be able to do anything without thinking of the spectators !) She turned her hand and pressed the palm against his lips. It was a comforting feeling.

" Virginia, you're being foolish. You're the loveliest person in the world—the straightest——"

" I'm not ! I'm just a beastly, selfish experimentalist." (She did not fumble for the word this time.) " You've no idea what a hound I am, Dan. You're so much nicer than I am that you can't see it." The phrase was vaguely familiar, and she pulled herself together with a jerk.

" I know you rather like to show off your vices," said Dan, " but that's only because you're such a kid."

Virginia stared at him, poised on the verge of sudden laughter. Was it Dan or Jimmy she was having tea with ? The little imp of devilry woke again, alert and ribald. Would they be the same all the way through ? A beastly little experimentalist —well, she had given them fair warning. Hastily Virginia ran over that devastating lunch-time conversation, seeking out the likely gambits.

" It's all a question of double bluff," she said. " I'm every bit as hard and selfish and cynical as I seem, and because I make no attempt to hide it people think it's simply a pose. It's much worse than being a hypocrite. I haven't any finer feelings at all, underneath. Modern, that's me."

" Not the real you—not the one I love." (" Good enough," said the small devil.) " You know, Virginia, you're not really a bit what you think you are. You have a sort of highly-coloured notion of yourself, fearfully blasé and world-worn, and you try to live up to it. I know you're not the early Victorian angel in the home, but then neither am I. Modern—that's us."

Virginia looked at him with new interest. That would never have occurred to Jimmy —but then, of course, Jimmy wasn't. That was what was so nice about him. These moderns——

" I think perhaps I'm not awfully fond of being it," she said slowly. " I'm so tired of being me." She looked round the emptying tea-room with sudden interest. It seemed to be peopled only by elderly ladies and youngish men, but at the counter a tall, fair girl was buying chocolates. She wasn't quite exotic enough for the purpose, but there was no one else and Virginia wanted to experiment.

" Dan," she said softly, " that's the sort of girl you ought to marry."

He looked at her critically and shook his head.

" Too Kensington. Virginia darling, stop playing about and listen. My dear, I'm most awfully in love with you and you treat me as though I were one of those amusing dolls you used to carry about last winter. You're taking up so much room that now I can't imagine a day without you in it——"

" Dan, you must stop ! " The experimentalist turned and fled abruptly, leaving Virginia to deal with the situation. " You can't conceive what a little rotter I am—even just now, Dan, while you were so terribly in earnest, I was making fun of you inside—you couldn't possibly love me if you knew what I was really like ! "

Dan regarded her in acute distress, puzzled and alarmed like a good dog whose mistress insists on leaving him behind. Then his face cleared a little and he took heart.

" You're not yourself, darling," he said. " It's the heat."

But this was too much for her, so that she forgot all about the waitress and got up abruptly. In another moment she must laugh, and that would be the unforgivable sin.

" Perhaps that's it, Dan. So I'm going to be most horribly rude and run away. No—please don't come too. I want to be quite by myself——"

" But, Virginia ! " Dan got up as well, and they implored each other across the orderly tea-table. " You can't go like this ! When am I going to see you again ? "

" 'Phone me up sometime—to-morrow. Dan, don't look so miserable ! " (They must be horribly conspicuous, standing there like the first act of a drawing-room tragedy.) " Try not to mind so much, Dan. I'm not worth it, really I'm not ! " And Virginia looked at her wrist-watch and hurried from the shop. Perhaps the waitress would think she had just remembered an engagement.

CURIOUSLY enough, once out in the street all her unseemly hilarity left her, making way for the vast encompassing boredom of the very hungry. It had been a beastly day, and both Jimmy and Dan had

got themselves into positions where something would simply have to be done about them. It wasn't nearly so stimulating as one would imagine to have two proposals on the same afternoon . . . and to retain a lien on both of them, so to speak; and it was really desolating to be taken out to lunch and tea and end up ravenous at five o'clock. Very modern, of course . . . but she would miss Jimmy and Dan terribly if they had to be sent out into the night for ever and ever—only that was absurd, and she would do something about it in the morning. It was probably due to hunger, this consuming despair so suddenly descended out of a blue and white sky; the window of an Express Dairy loomed up with all the ideal beauty of a mirage. Beautiful layers of solid, untemperamental foods, comfortable Swiss rolls, large, middle-class tea cakes . . . the sort of place where one would never meet one's friends. Virginia went in and sat down at a mottled marble table. The menu was delicious, a long list of satisfying, heavy names. The waitress looked plain but well fed.

"What," asked Virginia, "is a Buck Rarebit?"

"An ordinary Welsh Rarebit," explained the waitress, "with a poached egg on top."

"I'll have that," said Virginia gratefully, "and some tea."

"Pot or cup?" asked the waitress.

"Pot, please—strong Indian." Virginia felt quite reckless. "And can I have some buns to be going on with?"

With the first of the buns—enormous, sugar-caked and Bath—her equanimity began to return. In the mirror at the back of the shop she could just see the yellow splash of her new hat . . . a satisfying spectacle. And it had really been quite amusing in the Park—Brian was rather nice. New, at any rate. She might be seeing Brian next week, at Mildred's. Better write to Mildred. Modern, that's me. Virginia stretched her grey legs luxuriously under the unæsthetic table and yawned. It wasn't so bad after all, when you considered things calmly. And they'd soon be bringing her Buck Rarebit.

HOURS.

EIGHT for work and eight for play,
Eight for sleep—and that's my day.
Work is hard and play unkind;
Sleep comes not to troubled mind.
Do I play
Instead of working
People say
That I am shirking;
Do I doze
Instead of playing
Goodness knows
What they are saying;
Do I slave
Instead of sleeping
Hear them rave—
"What hours he's keeping!"
That is where the trouble lies—
Clocks and I don't synchronize.

E. E.

MR. BUFFUM HAS HIS EYES OPENED

By HUGH DE SÉLINCOURT

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

MR. BUFFUM disliked being ill almost as much as Monnie disliked him to be ill. He was ashamed of himself; as he was inclined to agree with Samuel Butler that a sick man deserved punishment more often than sympathy. For a man who led such a fortunate life as he did to be sick was not a hair's-breadth short of disgraceful.

However, a particularly merry and vivacious little influenza germ had pounced upon him in the village hall while he was being defeated in the semi-final of the billiards handicap, which he should have won, and after three feverish days and nights in bed he was sitting up wondering whether he wanted a cigarette enough to make it worth while to get up and walk across the room and fetch one from the box which lay on the window-sill, when the telephone bell rang in the hall below.

Kind Eliza was a stern nurse. She had told him that he must on no account leave his room, so on hearing the bell he instantly raised himself up by the arms of his chair and made for the door. But before he could open it he heard the receiver taken off and Eliza's voice in answer.

He returned guiltily to his chair and stretched his ears to listen. He could hear no words, but the change in the tone of Eliza's voice suggested that the speaker at the other end must surely be no tradesman.

He settled back in his chair with a comfortable smile. It was Niece Lucia. He'd lay his hat it was Niece Lucia. The receiver was hung up. No steps came his way. The comfortable smile faded. He waited for Eliza's steps: for ten long minutes he waited. Merely to irritate him, she went into the house-place, slammed about and returned to the kitchen. She was due with his glass of orange juice at 11.30. Surely no decent woman in her senses would keep a man confined to his room waiting for twenty minutes, merely to save one journey up the stairs and one journey down. Mr. Buffum surveyed the world and found it bad, definitely bad: his life, a mistake; himself a noble failure, long-suffering among thoughtless, selfish beings. His grievance spread to particulars.

Fancy permitting Mr. Wallace to write Racing Chat. It was iniquitous. How could a man convalesce properly without at least ten unread Wallaces piled at his elbow: only a miserable half-volume left —and they were short stories!

Eventually Eliza came. There were three pips in his orange juice. He stared coldly at them but refrained from mentioning their presence. Even a sick eye could observe that the woman was excited about something. Yet she stood there smiling and saying nothing, expecting him to start chatting, no doubt.

At last Mr. Buffum controlled his very natural indignation sufficiently to speak: he put a leading question in a casual voice:

"Did I hear the telephone bell, Eliza?"

The foolish woman started, flamed into a sudden flush and instantly answered: "Yes, sir!"

Mr. Buffum sipped his orange juice and waited: waited in vain: he raised a questioning brow, and noticed that Eliza was gazing vacantly at the mantelpiece like a girl surprised in a guilty secret and assuming innocence.

"No message for me, I take it," he brought himself to remark.

"No, sir; or I should, of course, have delivered it at once."

She appeared strangely agitated. After all, Eliza could be very little over forty. She had seemed hitherto contented enough:

but most people's lives contained some mystery. Passionate possibilities invaded Mr. Buffum's mind. He skidded badly from gloomy grandeur; slewed completely round backwards in abject apology:

"I'm sure I beg your pardon, Eliza. I might have known it was a private message."

Eliza found the need to swallow hard and clear her throat carefully before she said in an unusual voice: "Not at all."

"I get most shockingly irritable, you know."

"That's a very healthy sign. Poison working out of the system. A nasty thing, this influenza, drags a person right down; but you're on the mend now, and I've got a nice piece of sole for your lunch and we'll soon have you hoppin' round the place again merry as a sand-boy, quite your old self, and if you'll tip down that last little drop I'll take the glass with me as I've quite plenty to do, and the more you can sleep, the sooner you'll mend."

She went talking on and on; then almost snatched the glass from his fingers and hurriedly left the room.

Mr. Buffum pondered, astonished. He felt selfish in the earnestness of his hope that she was not in love. Monnie's father and mother and Eliza and he were such a pleasant little family party. Still, change was the law of life.

His story failed to grip him and he dozed.

A more familiar Eliza brought his lunch, and watched him eat his sole.

"Do you know, I thought it was Niece Lucia when the 'phone bell rang. Quite absurd tricks the mind plays on one when one is weakish. That's what made me grumpy as a disappointed small boy. As a matter of fact, I very much prefer not to see people I'm fond of when I'm ill. Nothing is farther from my taste than to be fussed over and petted and so forth when I'm seedy. I very much prefer to be alone. Very much."

"Yes. I'm sure you do. I can't see these modern girls in a sick-room."

Mr. Buffum was surprised at this agreement. "You've not quite caught my meaning, Eliza. I mean I want to be at my best so that I am better able to appreciate their company."

Eliza elicited a large and dubious "Oh!"

Mr. Buffum felt chatty; he continued: "I know you have a theory that men never know what they do want."

Eliza pulled the crushed pillow up from behind his back and said kindly: "That's not my theory; that's my experience."

Mr. Buffum laughed. "I'm at your mercy. You interrupt what I was going to say by making me more comfortable, then lay me out with words. A competent woman has a man at her mercy."

"Lucky for the man that she does."

"The unfairness of it shrieks to heaven."

"Men are spoilt babies; the sooner a woman learns that, the sooner she'll grow wise."

"You put the unfairness into a nutshell. You insist on spoiling me: then blame me for being spoiled."

"Oh, you'll pass. And, anyhow, you're looking twice the man you did yesterday."

"I shall be hopping about like a sand-boy to-morrow, as you put it. A nice way of describing an elderly gentleman's quiet activities."

"And now you'd better lie down and get a proper sleep." She tucked him up on the couch, drew the curtains and left him: whereupon Mr. Buffum, convinced that sleep was quite impossible, obediently slept. He lay dozing, mildly wondering at his capacity for sleep and refusing to wake fully up, when a tentative tapping at the door roused him. This was not Eliza who tapped and entered. Who was it, then? The latch was lifted, the door a little opened. Niece Lucia's voice said: "May I come in?"

"Yes, oh yes, you may!" said Mr. Buffum.

She ran in: sat on the couch by him: stroked his forehead.

"Fancy your coming now, you darling girl!"

"Eliza told me you were ill."

"Oh!" said Mr. Buffum.

"Yes. I made her promise to ring me up. I know what you are. I 'phoned this morning asking if she thought you'd like to see me. She said she thought you would. Do you?"

"Yes. Very much. Only . . ."

"What?"

"Oh, never mind. It doesn't matter."

"Cough it up, old man. Bring it well off the chest—the reservation."

"Quite dutiful and right, of course. When a person has—er—has been of some help, to come and see him when he's sick."

"How clever you are!" said Lucia jauntily. "That's just exactly it! Put so delicately, too. Repay you. . . . It

must sharpen your wits, being ill." She removed herself from the sofa.

"Oh dear! I do like you!" said Mr. Buffum, feebly rolling his face over on the cushion. "Perhaps you'll tell me exactly why you have come. I like to have some things well rubbed in, you know. I like to wallow in them."

"Oh, do you!" said Niece firmly, moved by his huge contentment at her presence. "Well, as a matter of fact, I like to be on sure ground and I never step up from the bargain basement. Gratitude is expectation of favours to come. You're a most objectionable old man. I don't think I like you much when you're scrubby and ill and generally disgusting."

"No," said Mr. Buffum blissfully. "I feel you don't."

He took advantage of his convalescence quietly to say things which are perhaps better left unsaid. "Coming all this way just *to be with me*. Affection. There is nothing lovelier in the world than affection."

"Now then, old man, don't get potty. You're hopelessly on the wrong side of the road. I know how Eliza spoils you and how soft and sorry you get for yourself, so I ran down to brace you up and show you you aren't a quarter as bad as you imagine. Stop your ghastly moping."

Mr. Buffum continued to lie back wallowing in contentment.

"No one ever before has come quite so far just to be with me."

"Stop it now, will you! I thought I'd come and came. Nothing could be simpler or more natural."

"That's just it. Or more heavenly nice for me."

"Will you stop making mountains out of molehills!"

"I'm only stating facts, dear, quietly and without any exaggeration. In fact," he raised his head, "rather understating them."

"The truth is you're mad at being waked up and having to wait for your tea."

"Yes. Yes." Mr. Buffum smiled. "That's it. Especially when one sleeps in the afternoon, the only hope is an immediate cup of hot tea."

"There you are, you see. You're a complete old fraud with your polite speeches. I can see right through you, through and through."

"How I hope you can!"

"Well, if you want to know," she sat abruptly down on the couch and swift fingers gave a quick touch to his forehead, "it is rather nice here—being with you." She jumped up.

"I'll help Eliza with the tea."

She ran out of the room.

After tea Niece insisted on a bout of Bezique, challenging him to play her 10,000 up. Mr. Buffum's plea for Piquette as a far better game was swept away;—much too strenuous for an invalid. Niece romped away with it; taught him Euchre, and saw that he was in bed by 10.15, whither he went grumbling that he wasn't an atom tired.

Next morning was warm enough for him to sit in the garden. His legs were weak but obedient. He felt cheerful and amazingly better. Of course he disliked to be fussed over and petted when he was not quite up to the mark, but a long quiet week-end with Niece was a very different matter. He carefully explained this to Eliza, that there might be no misunderstanding, and she listened to his explanation without comment.

He was sitting in the garden, waiting for Lucia to return from shopping, when a car roared up the drive. Monnie dived through bushes and under the pergola, and with awed face panted:

"Guv'nor! It's a supercharged Sports!"

"Who is in it?" Mr. Buffum asked, in deep chagrin.

"Dunno! Stranger bloke, but he's some driver: a double change down in one as he turned into the drive."

"Go and see who it is."

Monnie disappeared. The car stopped.

Mr. Buffum heard a young assured voice inquire cheerily: "Does Mr. Buffum live here?"

Came Monnie's quick, shy "Yessir!"

"Good for me! Got it in one! Does his niece Miss Lucia Dakin happen to be staying here?"

Again the quick, shy "Yessir!"

Mr. Buffum waited, hearing the sound of their voices but no words. He would rather have been told of this visit. It was silly of him to suppose that she had come all that way merely to be with him. No wonder she had been cross with him when he made the suggestion. It was dear of her to come at all. He must not be foolish and selfish. Young people were young people, especially nowadays. He must try and not be old-fashioned in his ways. Of course she had gone for a run to meet him

and missed him. What could be more natural? The road was difficult to find.

He would see them at meals. Their company would be pleasant. He would enjoy it more if he weren't seedy. Anyhow, he would be obliged to rest a lot and it would be nicer for Niece to have a companion of her own age. Didn't he want her to treat the place as her home?

But his heart sank a little, and sank a little more when the bright owner of the supercharged Sports model tentatively appeared through the pergola and looked about, hesitating. Surplus plus-fours, violent stockings, a squash hat rakishly tilted—a most brilliant and alarming young man. Now, which of the Y.M.L.A. (or Young Men's Lucia Association) could this be? Mr. Buffum ran through names in hopeless confusion. Monnie's voice directed, "Guv'nor's on the lawn to yer lef'." The young man strode forward. Mr. Buffum rose, feeling most awkward as he held his rug round him with the left hand, extending the right in welcome. It was seized and gripped.

"Mr. Buffum? Hope I'm not intruding." (He gave a happy laugh and blinked.) "Passing this way, and pushed in. What?" (The laugh and blink were repeated.)

"Any friend of my niece is always welcome," said Mr. Buffum courteously.

Monnie, breathless, staggered out with a chair, on which the young man seated himself and then began to twiddle his hat round his finger.

"Bobbie," he announced, intent on the twiddling, "Bobbie Linthrop. Passing, you know, and just pushed in. What?"

"Quite," said Mr. Buffum. "My niece will be back at any minute."

"I say. Friend . . ." (He jumped up.) "Sure I'm not intruding? Perhaps I'd better . . ." (Again the laugh and blink as he collapsed into the chair.) "Priceless lark! Stunning girl. I mean—this is a priceless little place you've got, sir. Mind if I smoke?" (He produced a gold cigarette-case from his waistcoat.) "Have one. No?"

He tossed up a cigarette to his mouth, missed, caught it in his hand, tried again, missed.

"If not in five, my luck's dead out."

But the fifth was successful.

"Close shave, that," he said as he lighted it. "Bobbie. Bobbie Linthrop. That's my name. If my luck's out, I can do nothing."

Mr. Buffum wondered if this was the youth's ordinary manner, which was so strange and new to him that he could not make up his mind whether the young man was suffering from extreme shyness or from extreme self-assurance.

"This is the modern manner," he thought to himself a little sadly. "I must try and not appear too old-fashioned. He will be calling me '*dear old bean*' soon, and I must not mind."

The young man was sprawling in his chair, elaborately and noisily smoking, inhaling enormous draughts of tobacco and blowing them out to heaven, with arms flung wide.

Mr. Buffum watched him, much impressed. "Dear me!" he thought, "that's the way to smoke a cigarette," and endeavoured not to feel too much of an old fogey merely because he could never hope to smoke with such perfect modern abandon.

He hardly liked to interrupt the ceremony, but at last he ventured to remark: "I hope you will be able to take lunch with us."

Bobby Linthrop started, sat up, swallowed smoke, choked, and gasped out: "Oh, I say. You know. Well, of course. That is most awfully decent of you."

Coughing stopped him. Mr. Buffum felt guilty that his interruption had so disastrously broken, as it were, the spell of the ceremony; but Bobbie did not seem greatly to mind, for as soon as he could speak he said:

"Don't you let me butt in! I mean . . . You see. It's like this . . ." He leaned forward, paused to inhale with great success, and to blow out a long puff of smoke. "Lucia Dakin, your niece . . ."

Mr. Buffum waited, expecting and dreading a confidence, but Bobbie tailed off into —"I was passing, you know, and just pushed in," a remark which, Mr. Buffum thought, as he had heard it before quite distinctly, it was unnecessary to repeat with such fervour.

Obviously he ought to try and put the poor young man at his ease, and he would have done so if he had been quite sure whether the young man was ill-at-ease at talking with such a poor old specimen or for some more personal reason of his own.

Mr. Buffum was on the point of making a modest attempt to soothe his visitor when the young man at last achieved the manner after which he had been struggling and said with the kindly condescension due to an old



"Mr. Buffum watched him, much impressed. 'Dear me!' he thought, 'that's the way to smoke a cigarette.'"

fellow, stuck away in the country: "Awful pretty place you have here, sir."

"I'm so glad you like it," said Mr. Buffum, hot to think how near he had been to taking a false step. He observed the young man eyeing him under half-closed lids, and, looking away, saw Monnie hovering by the wonder car. To create a diversion he called the boy:

"Monnie, tell Eliza that the young gentleman is staying to lunch. And, Monnie, bring out a bottle of beer."

"Right, Guv'nor," Monnie answered, eager to do anything for the owner of such a car.

"Topping kid," said Robert, responsive to Monnie's awe.

"He takes a passionate interest in motors," said Mr. Buffum, suddenly conscious that there was something really nice in this young man after all.

"Shall I take him for a spin?"

"He'd adore it," said Mr. Buffum. "Most delightful of you to suggest it."

"Not a bit! Not a bit!"

How easy it was to misjudge people, especially if their manner was not quite what one was accustomed to!

Monnie appeared, advancing from the house circumspectly, staring at a bottle and two glasses balanced on a tray. He stopped a few yards away, uncertain whether to set the tray down and hand the bottle and glasses or to present the bottle on the tray.

At last Mr. Buffum realised his difficulty.

"Bring it here, Monnie," he said.

"Oh, I say!" Bobbie exploded. "What about a little dash round, young fellah? And then a drink thereafterwards?"

"What! Me?" gasped Monnie, nearly dropping the tray. "In a supercharged Sports——!"

Bobbie burst into a loud glad laugh which warmed Mr. Buffum's heart, and when they walked off, Bobbie's hand on the boy's shoulder, speaking of a stretch of straight road where they could let her out, his heart was completely won. The car roared off.

When Eliza approached to find out about the strange visitor, he said:

"That's Mr. Linthrop, Eliza. A friend of Miss Lucia's. He has a heart of pure gold. Entirely on his own, he suggested taking Monnie for a run. He is staying to lunch. Perhaps we ought to offer him a shake-down for the night. Or to stay over the week-end. It'll be a delightful surprise for Miss Lucia when she returns."

"Oh!" said Eliza. "Miss Lucia doesn't know he's coming, then?"

"Well, she didn't mention it to me. But I expect . . . you know what young people are . . . she let him understand . . . how shall I say? That she'd be alone with old Uncle . . . I want her to feel the place is like a home. That she can make her own arrangements in her own way. I've only asked him to lunch as yet. I'm always rather backward."

"Oh!" said Eliza coldly. "I see. Are you going to drink that beer or have the white of egg and milk I've got ready for you?"

"What doesn't please you, now, Eliza?"

"One needn't say much but one can think a lot!" said Eliza darkly.

"I don't know what there is to upset you."

"And who says I am upset?"

"You can't expect others to think about me as you do."

"Tst! Listen to the man!" Eliza apparently addressed a leaf on a distant tree.

"Something is displeasing you."

"Maybe yes. Maybe no. But I've got plenty to do. Can't stop here talking. That won't get us married to-morrow!"

"I'd much rather you told me," Mr. Buffum persisted, though he was aware that Eliza fell back on old sayings for support only in her most obstinate mood.

"Shall I make up the bed in the spare room?"

"Well—I really can't quite say . . . that depends . . ."

"He'll stay if he's asked," said Eliza with a bitterness Mr. Buffum quite failed to understand. Then she sighed, and Mr. Buffum being too puzzled to speak, she went on: "Perhaps you *can* tell me about your milk."

"Of course, I want the drink you've been kind enough to get ready for me."

She brought the glass out, still dark and unbending, and Mr. Buffum made one last pathetic plea to find the cause of her annoyance. He extracted nothing more illuminating than, "There's things I like, and things I don't. I know his sort."

Mr. Buffum gave it up, and concentrated, as he sipped his invalid's concoction, on the delightful surprise that was waiting for Niece Lucia on her return. He felt that he had quite conquered his selfishness and that the foolish hurt at not being told of the

young man's coming was mainly due to his not being quite up to the mark after his little bout of 'flu. A girl could not blurt out these things: could not, however modern, make definite plans like a housekeeper; must leave room for romantic possibilities: and what could be more romantic than to throw out a hint and to leave it to the gallant to saddle his horse and come galloping after. . . . It was not their fault that the horse had vanished before horse-power—romance had not changed: only the trappings and suits of romance. It was all perfectly clear and intelligible to a sane man. The worst of illness was that it filled a man with self-pity, and self-pity dulled and stupefied.

Certainly the young man—Bobbie Linthrop—must be persuaded to stop the week-end. And on Monday morning he could give Lucia fifteen minutes' start and race her to London. That would be amusing. That would lend zest—pursuit in courtship—marriage by capture. He'd show them old Uncle wasn't too much of a fogey to enter into the new spirit of things. He'd show them. After all, he knew enough about driving a car to be able to understand the pleasure of speeding in chase of a girl at fifty miles an hour.

Ah! Here Niece Lucia was. He'd not break the happy news to her quite at once. She came hurrying towards him.

"Out in the garden!" she cried. "That's capital!"

"Yes. I'm feeling ever so much better."

He beamed comprehensively, and Niece, instantly sensing something in the wind, said:

"What's the matter, old man?"

"Nothing now. Self-pity *was* the matter."

"Rubbish!" Lucia answered, quite unimpressed.

"Only last night, you said yourself . . ."

"I was rotting you."

"There's many a true word spoken in . . ."

"No truth in that jest. Beer. Oh, good!"

She leaned over for bottle and glass.

"Two glasses?" she commented, questioning.

"Not past the egg-and-milk stage, are you, old man?"

"No. *I'm* not," he answered, mysteriously stressing the pronoun.

Niece unscrewed the stopper, deftly poured out a glass of beer, looked straight at him over its top, drank appreciatively, sighed happily and said without concern:

"Bubbling with news. But take your own time. Don't let me spoil it. If you've got a cigarette on you, though . . ."

Mr. Buffum hastily produced his case, still beaming.

"I've had a visitor," he announced, watching her face.

Niece Lucia lighted her cigarette, waiting for further information. Mr. Buffum liked her unshakable coolness.

"I'll give you three guesses."

Not an eyelid quivered, not the remotest sign appeared to give her away. None would, of course. Niece could carry anything off. Mr. Buffum was proud of her. Envious, too, of her perfect composure, aware of the dither that would be agitating himself if placed in her shoes.

"The curate," she suggested innocently as a child playing a game it wasn't awfully keen on.

Mr. Buffum could not help laughing.

"I say, old man, what is amusing you?" she asked, taking another quiet drink at the beer; then leaned comfortably back to remark slowly: "It is good here with you. So peaceful."

Mr. Buffum enjoyed his little comedy to the full.

"I expect it is. Almost too peaceful. But you're not guessing."

"Sorry. No. I forgot. What is his name? You know—the doctor chap."

"You're on the wrong tack. It was someone who was passing and just pushed in."

"Good Heaven!" She started. "You don't mean Bobbie . . . Bobbie Linthrop?"

Mr. Buffum's beam deepened into a chuckle.

"Yes, I do mean Bobbie! Bobbie Linthrop. However did you guess?"

"Guess! Gosh! He drops in at any old earthly hour and always says, 'I was passing and just pushed in.' Egregious ass!"

She imitated laugh and blink and voice.

"That just about does put the lid on. Thank the Lord you had the sense to push him out—passing and just pushed in. Like his infernal cheek!"

Mr. Buffum was beginning to stammer explanation when Eliza came walking primly out.

"I prefer to get the beds made in proper time," she said, "which is, of a morning. So I've made the young gentleman's bed

up in the spare room. I thought I'd better let you know."

Lucia gasped.

"Made the young gentleman's bed up! Whatever do you mean?"

"What I say, Miss Lucia."

"You don't mean to say . . . ?" she began, but words failed her. "Great Heavens!" She blankly uttered the words, half supplication, half curse, modified by no amusement.

"My dear, you must not misunderstand me. I naturally supposed . . . I mean . . . I have not asked your friend to stay the night or the week-end. I'm very backward at these things, and at first I must say . . . but he took Monnie, absolutely on his own suggestion, for a drive in his super Sports charger . . . I mean his supercharged sporter . . . and . . . he is a very good-hearted young fellow. He was most earnest about . . . about . . . butting in, and of course . . ."

Mr. Buffum waved weak hands: both women were staring at him: he could not face their stare—the stare of people at a curiosity.

"It all seemed most natural," he pleaded.

Lucia turned away in silence from him. She spoke to Eliza, as one sensible person speaking to another sensible person, with relief.

"I'm so sorry that you should have had all that trouble for nothing, Eliza. I'll help you unmake the bed."

They left Mr. Buffum without a word, and left him disconsolate. He very soon found himself (what man would not?) generalising about women, with special reference to their unaccountability.

What ought he to have done? He was not responsible for the young man's coming. Bobbie Linthrop was obviously a most good-natured young fellow—with any amount of dash about him—devoted to Lucia—extremely well-to-do. He must have had some encouragement . . .

Mr. Buffum thought wistfully of some sort of Men's League. It was unpleasant to be made to feel like a smacked baby, when his only fault lay in being too hospitable to her visitors.

The returning car roared up the drive. He was really in a most awkward position—quite compromising indeed—with regard to the young fellow.

Monnie's head dodged over the hedge: Monnie's body came tearing through the yew hedge—a strictly forbidden path.

"I say, Guv'nor. We touched sixty-five. We touched sixty-five. Honest we did. Lumme! She can move. She can do over seventy, but the road wasn't long enough: not the straight."

Bobbie Linthrop joined them, quite at his ease, like an old friend.

"Yes. She's a good little bus, sir. What about that drink?"

Monnie fled off towards the cottage to tell the great tidings, presumably, to his mother. Bobbie helped himself to beer and sat down.

Mr. Buffum announced, he hoped quite casually: "My niece has returned."

But the effect on Bobbie was enormous. He started, nearly upset his glass of beer, leaned forward and asked tensely:

"Well—what about it?"

Really, thought Mr. Buffum, it was too bad to leave him to bear the brunt of it. She must have heard the car come back.

"I mentioned . . ." He hesitated. "I mentioned that you were passing and—er . . . and just pushed in."

A horrified look settled on Bobbie's face.

"Not those words?"

"Yes. So far as I remember. Those were the very words."

"That's torn it," he groaned, and forlornly drained his glass of beer.

"But whatever words I may have used . . ." Mr. Buffum began indignantly.

"Oh, it doesn't matter. You couldn't know. And five's supposed to be my lucky number, and I caught it at the fifth. I did, now, didn't I?"

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Buffum, bewildered.

"The cigarette, you know." He took one from his case and put it sadly in his mouth. "I haven't the heart to try again."

"Oh—ah—yes. I recall . . ."

"And she went off the deep end," he added, viciously jabbing a finger on a large lighter. "The thing won't work, of course. It wouldn't. Not my day. Have you got a match?"

Mr. Buffum, eager to be comforting, fumbled hastily for his match-box and handed it as kindly as he knew how.

"Ticklish job! A fellow doesn't know what to do to please 'em."

"I have often felt that," Mr. Buffum was bound to admit. All ways seemed to lead him in a wrong direction to a position falser than the last.

"If you were a girl now, wouldn't you like a chap to come all the way from London for a glimpse of you?"

It was a violent hypothesis; but Mr. Buffum did his best to imagine himself a girl and eventually faltered out:

"Well, it might depend, you know . . ."

"Oh, say it! Say it! Don't mind me!" the young man cried.

At last Niece Lucia was coming. She came swiftly out and was upon them almost before Robert could rise and turn.

chair," and began to rise but was pushed quietly down by a firm hand.

"I don't know where Bimberton is," poor Robert said feebly.

Mr. Buffum said, "Let me fetch a map," and began to rise but was again pushed quietly down by a firm hand.

"He ought to know where his aunt lives."



"'Good Heaven!' She started. 'You don't mean Bobbie . . . Bobbie Linthrop?'"

"Ah, Bobbie!" she said, shaking his limp hand briskly. "Getting on famously with Uncle, I see. But you mustn't keep him, dear, or he'll be late for lunch with his aunt at Bimberton."

Niece stood by Mr. Buffum's chair. Poor Robert had collapsed into his own seat. Now he struggled on to his feet.

"Won't you sit here?"

Mr. Buffum said, "Let me fetch another

"I might if I had one," said Bobbie miserably.

"You must understand I will not be followed about." The quietness in her voice gave it a deadly emphasis.

Robert became almost tearful. "How can I lunch at Bimberton with my aunt if I don't know where Bimberton is and haven't got an aunt? I believe you're only just sending me off."

"Be careful, Bobbie, or the sudden brain-wave may prove too much for you."

Mr. Buffum felt more and more on prickles of uneasiness; he had been guilty of helping to lure the poor young man to this awful discomfiture. So, summoning all his courage, he said: "You must allow me to thank you very warmly for the delight you have given Monnie in taking him for a drive in your wonderful car."

"Yes, that was jolly decent of you, Bobbie. Your trip is far from wasted. He'll never forget it."

"But I say, look here," he brightened to begin. "Won't you . . . ?"

"Certainly," said Lucia. "I'd love to see you start her up."

Bobbie drooped and rose.

"Oh, all right, then! Good-bye, sir. Not my day. Though I swear that five is my lucky number."

He sagged away, a pathetic figure in his surplus plus-fours and violent stockings, faintly expostulating to a taut, upright, indomitable Niece.

The supercharged Sports roared off. A demure girl returned and sat down to look very straight at a bewildered and uncomfortable Uncle, who broke a silence that was painful to him by saying:

"My dear, really. I have never heard a human being spoken to as . . ."

"Bobbie's Bobbie," she said as though reminding him, not taking her eyes off his face.

"Yes, but, after all, you know . . ." Mr. Buffum struggled on, "a human being . . . no human being . . . I mean . . ." He gave it up. His words were not touching Niece Lucia. She remained silent and still. Then she said quietly:

"You didn't really suppose, did you, that I'd arranged to plant Bobbie Linthrop on you for the week-end?"

"Not quite arranged: so much as—well . . . it seemed only natural. I mean—a companion of your own age. I'm only too glad you should do as you like here. That's to say. It must be rather dull, and I don't yet quite understand modern ways of going on. It has all so changed. . . . He seemed a good-hearted young fellow."

"What a furtive little beast you must think me!"

"Now, please, dear. Don't take it like that. There's no need to be angry."

"I am angry. I'm furious."

"I beg you not to be."

"Must you always think that unless some boy is messing about round me I can't be happy?"

"My dear, put like that . . . it sounds as though . . . but you must admit it is pleasant to have . . . to have boy friends. Pleasanter than . . . an elderly relation can easily become a bore."

"I am not aware that I have ever pretended not to like what you call boy friends."

There was an awkward silence. Mr. Buffum found it difficult to stand up to such very direct, determined speech. Niece's eyes began to twinkle.

"I am afraid you're rather a horrible old man."

"It is uncommonly pleasant to know that one is liked: and uncommonly difficult to believe it," Mr. Buffum managed to say.

"Not a nice man," she murmured. "No. Not really a nice man! All your fault I was almost curt with poor Bobbie."

"Heaven help the man you're quite curt with."

"He must have heard me tell Marion I was coming here and wormed the address out of someone. Bobbie's right enough in a way. But he's far too rich and far too spoiled and far too thick. It's unkind to let anyone become a nuisance. One has simply to heave and shoulder him out of the light. He'd brought his suitcase with him, you know."

Vivid in Mr. Buffum's chivalrous mind still lingered the image of the soft girl among ruthless men in the great town. His eyes opened to another picture as Niece revealed herself—of a resolute young person sure of herself, tough, firm-lipped . . .

And suddenly she was kneeling by his side, yielding and tender and saying in a very different voice:

"I'm so fond of you, darling. I'm never bored with you. You're such a friend: so utterly and completely dear. I hate you to think I'm a little beast who can't appreciate anything and only wants to make use of you. You mustn't ever think that for a single second."

Mr. Buffum stroked her cropped head and said "My dear! My dear!" quite distinctly, considering how much he was moved.

As suddenly she jumped up and gave one good healthy sniff, not pretty, but finally effective. Then turned on him:

"Yes. Really a horrible old man. Glad to take a mean advantage. Oh, if you weren't an invalid, how I'd shake you!



" Robert became almost tearful. 'How can I lunch at Bimberton with my aunt if I don't know where Bimberton is and haven't got an aunt? I believe you're only just sending me off.' "

You're disgruntling and disgusting and detestable. I wish now you'd allowed dear, simple Bobbie to stay, instead of packing him off with a flea in his ear. And Eliza tells me you dislike being petted and fussed over when you're ill. You told her so with your own lips. You accomplished old fraud! Oh, how she laughed! Who could help it! For goodness' sake, give me a cigarette and don't look at me like that."

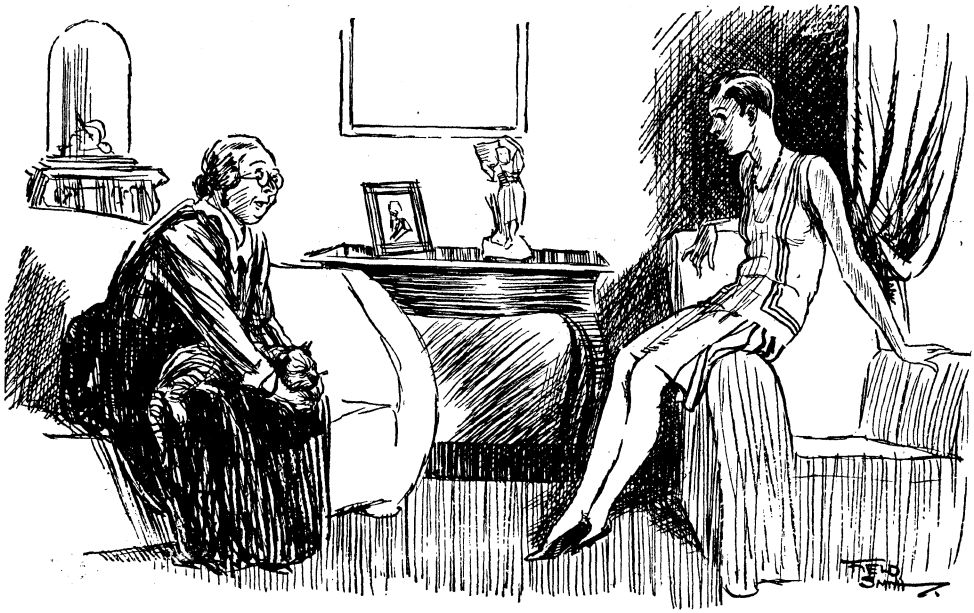
Mr. Buffum obeyed one behest and handed her a cigarette. He disobeyed the other behest and continued to "look at her like that"; moreover, made his disobedience more flagrant by saying with no apology:



MASQUERADE.

"I should like you to realise, young woman, the enormous difference you make in my life."

"Oh, do I!" said Niece quickly, between little puffs at her cigarette. "I'm glad."



CHRISTMAS ANXIETIES.

VISITING AUNT: My dear, I do hope you haven't acquired this dreadful modern habit of oxtail drinking?

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

SYMPATHY

By W. Pett Ridge

I WILL allude to him (said Alfred) as Rhino, because this was the name by which he was generally referred to in the club. Rhino, short for rhinoceros; also a word meaning cash.

"Why was the chap elected?" new members used to inquire. The answer was that in nineteen o eight he seemed free from blemish, so to speak; all white, as you may say. "Why don't you get rid of him?" It had to be explained that this was no easy job. If a member neglected to pay his annual subscription, he could be hoofed out. If he was made bankrupt, away he went. If he—according to the book—"persistently infringes the rules and regulations, or is guilty of conduct unbecoming to a gentleman, or prejudicial to the interests of the club," then he was pushed off. Nothing is said in the book about a snore. And when you came down to brass tacks, that was the only real grievance.

I admit it got worse. Rhino could take his oats, like the rest, and when he had made a good meal he went off to the smoking-room, and slept directly. For a few minutes all was well. Other members, glancing at him as he sat in an easy chair by the fireplace with his eyes closed, said, "Bless his little heart. Hope he didn't forget to say his prayers!" And then the tumult began. Dropping of fireirons, or putting *The Times* over his face, made no difference. In the result it came to this; that the smoking-room had to be given up to him. So long as he snored, the room was his. When he happened to be at the top of his form he could make the windows rattle. More than once I have mistaken the row for thunder.

The situation was complicated by the fact that Captain Greenleaf had, for some time, been paying attention to Rhino's daughter. It jarred him when he heard talk of inducing Rhino to retire from membership.

"Try to cultivate a spirit of altruism," he begged. "If the old man is forced to stay at home, it will queer my pitch."

"Let him join some other club."

"He wouldn't stand an earthly."

And as young Greenleaf was a popular lad, and everyone recognised that the girl and the money together meant a lot to him, it was agreed that patience had to be exercised.

"Only do hurry up!" urged the members.

Captain Greenleaf was able one day to announce to me, and to the members, that the date of the marriage had been fixed, and private consultations at once took place. Two members waited on Rhino at the hour when snoring ceased

for the afternoon, and the interval for tea was taken.

"In the first place," said Rhino, having listened to their appeal, "all this is based on misapprehension. I don't snore. I never have snored. Snoring is altogether foreign to my nature."

"If you want evidence——"

"And as to your suggestion that I should resign, I tell you at once that I intend to do nothing of the sort. Go away, and play with your toys, and don't interfere with grown-ups!"

When the next interview opened, I happened to be in the smoking-room. It was argued that human endurance had its limits; it was contended that these limits had now been reached.

"Directly it starts," promised the deputation, "one of us will empty a tumbler of water over you. If that has no effect, we shall ring up the fire station."

"I am quite willing," said Rhino calmly, "to make a police-court case of it. And I'll see that I get the best legal help obtainable; money will be no object. Furthermore, the committee will eject any man who assaults another between these walls. Alfred," to me, "I shall want you to give evidence regarding threats."

A third set approached Rhino with a view of having a heart-to-heart talk, as between member and member. They said no one wanted anything but peace. Would Rhino consult a specialist, and if nothing could be done, would he realise that a West End Club was not a fit place for him? Rhino answered that he had never had a day's illness in his life, and recommended the advisers to go to Jericho.

The wedding took place, and it was stated that the bride's father slept noisily through the whole period of the reception. At the club the day was occupied by consultations. A plan of campaign was adopted. I was instructed to fire the first shot.

"Morning," I said when Rhino came into the hall. "Wedding go off all right yesterday? Must have been a trying day for you, sir. You look ten years older."

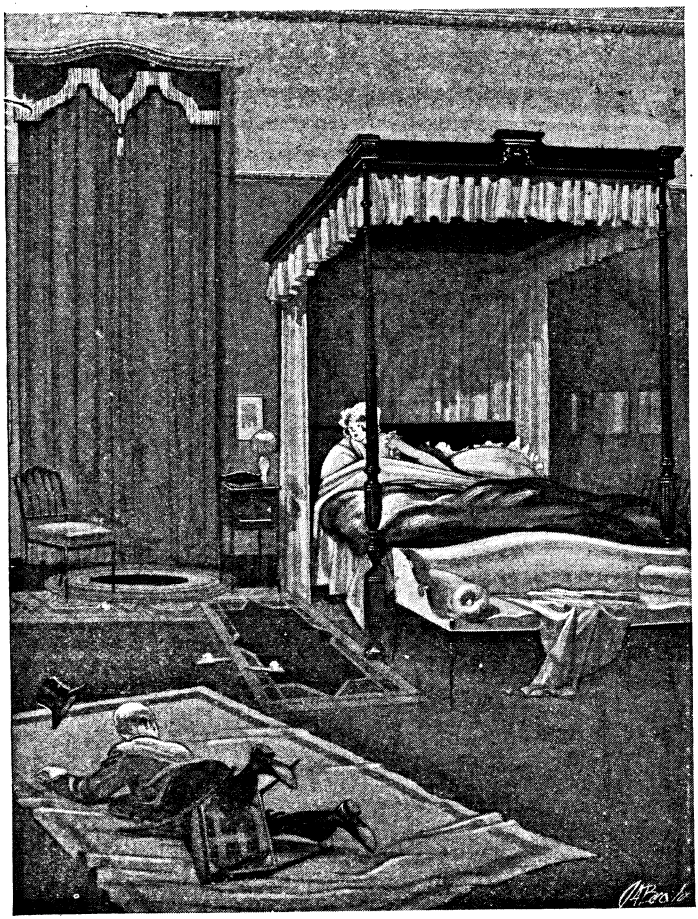
In the lounge, members, resting there on the fender seat, gazed at him concernedly.

"By Jove," exclaimed one, audibly, "he does look a wreck, and no mistake!"

Everyone who came into the coffee-room for lunch gave a start of perturbed amazement on catching sight of Rhino. The men near him talked of Harley Street, and nursing-homes.

"Dear old uncle of mine," said one. "Quiet sleeper all his life. Suddenly begins habit of snoring. We take him off to see a man in Cavendish Square — and Cavendish Square man goes all over him with a foot rule. 'Great Heavens!' says Cavendish Square man, 'you've come to me only just in time. That snoring of yours is the preliminary signal of a general breakdown in health. You must travel abroad for a year.' Dear old uncle came back last week, sound as houses. Health restored; snoring gone."

Rhino left the club at two o'clock, and, in the hall, asked me if I knew anything about shipping firms. He left the next day by *S.S. Majolica*, and I had a picture post card from him, only yesterday, written at Antofagasta.



IDENTIFICATION.

"Is that you, Henry?"

"Yes'h—leasht—shink sho'. If 'tisn't I'm goin' to have a row with you about it!"

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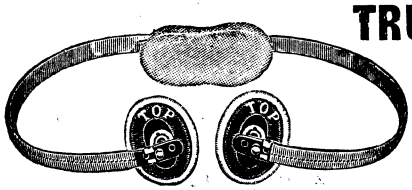
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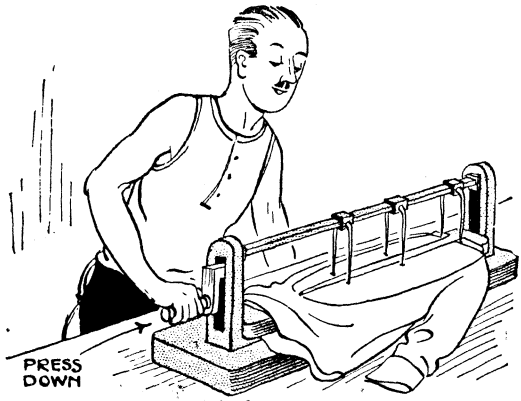
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08

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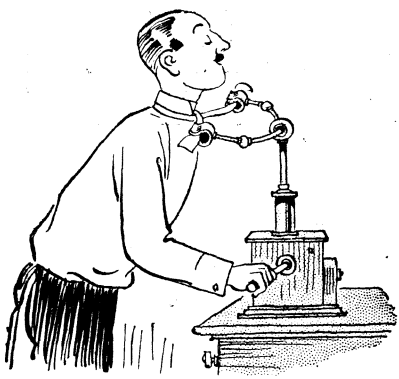




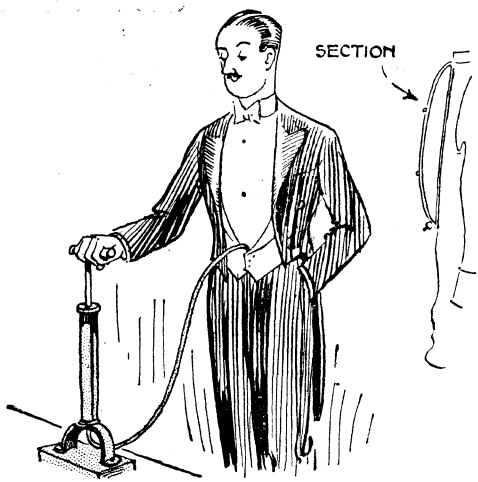
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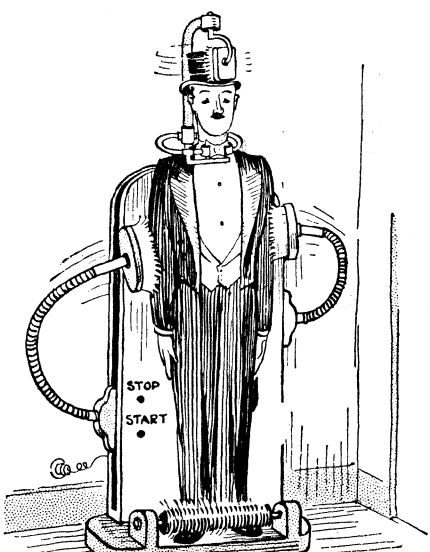
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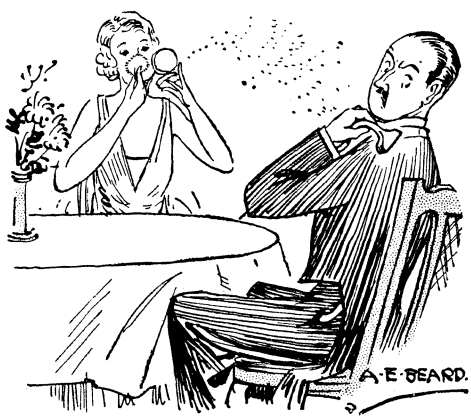
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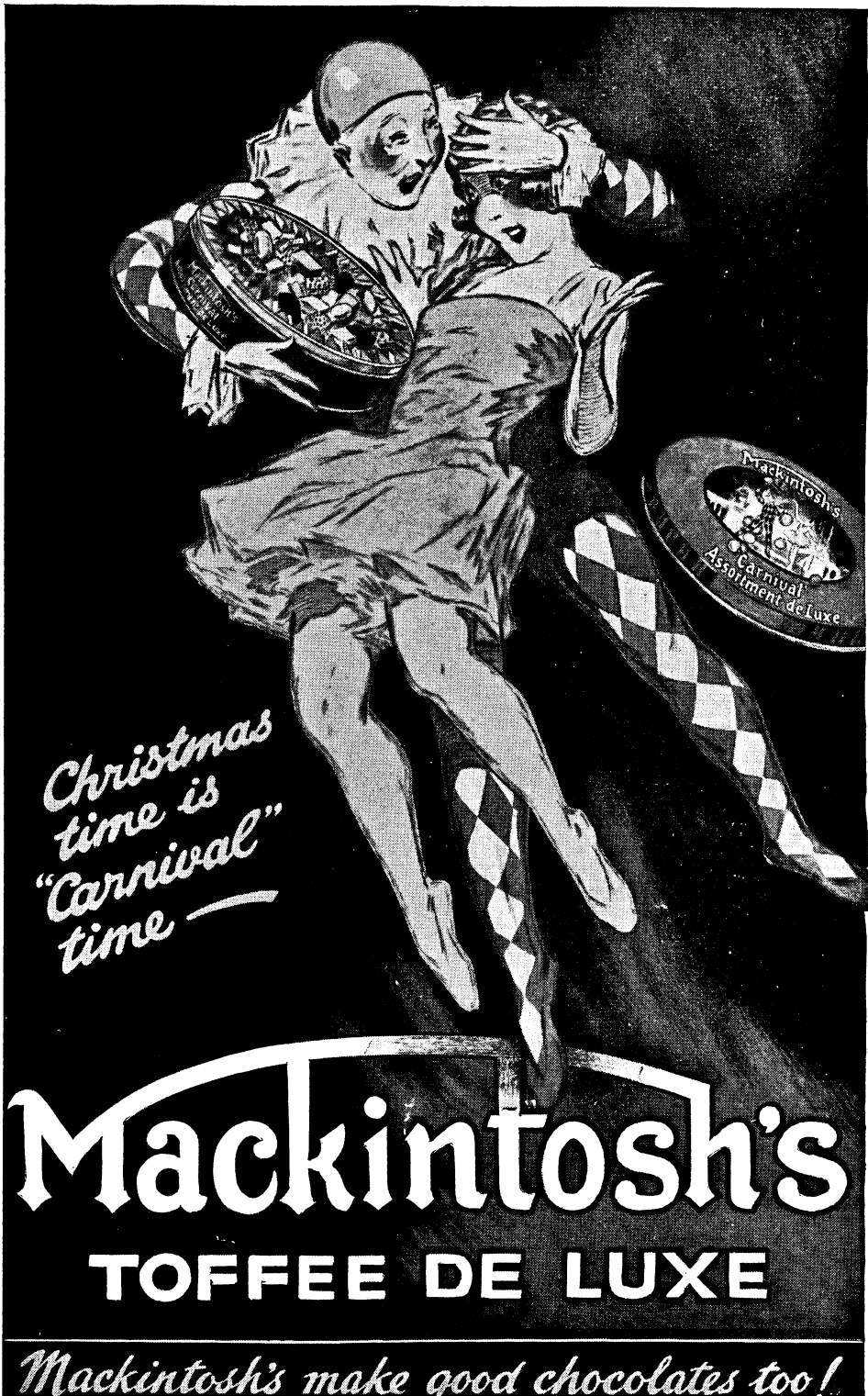
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THE OTHER: Not much, mum, 'cept I would like to know sometimes where 'e spends 'is evenings.

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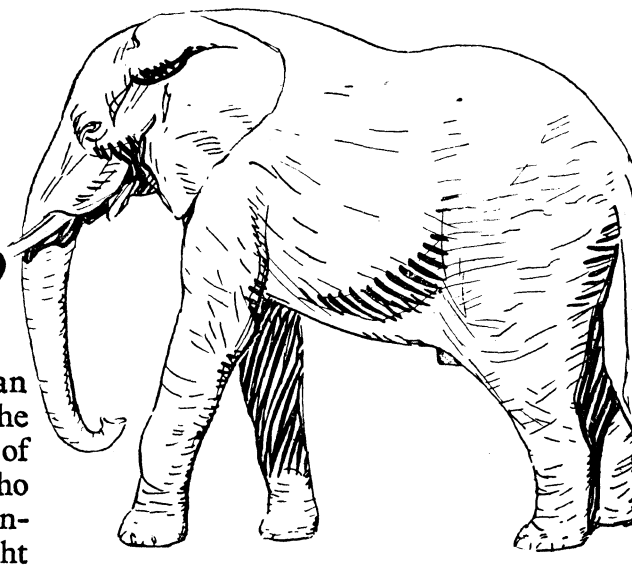


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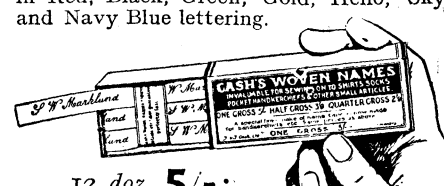
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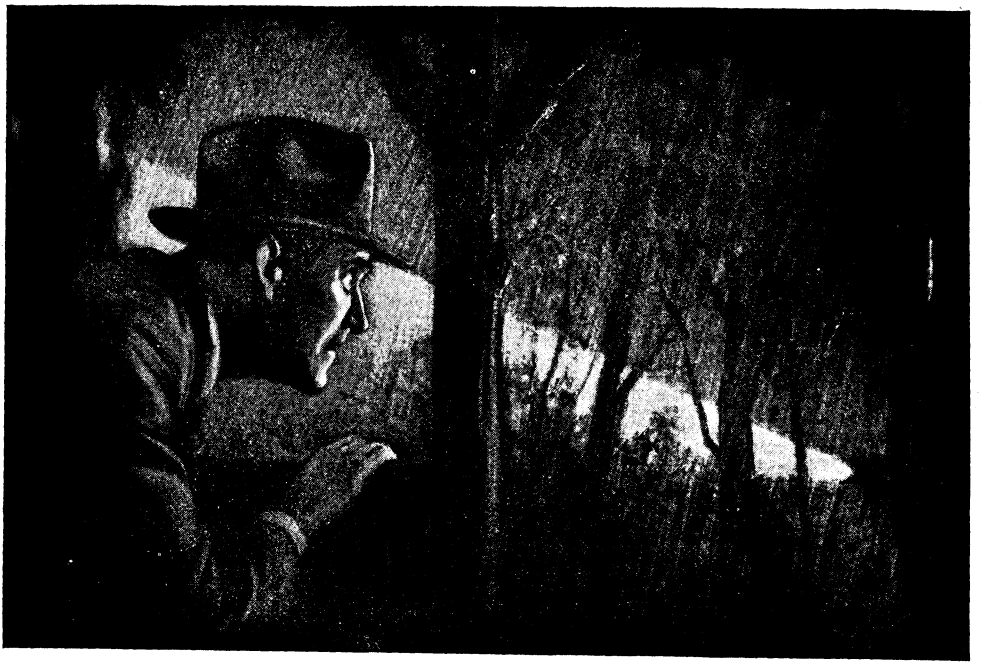
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HOW TO KEEP FIT.



"'I didn't do it!' he screamed feebly. 'My hands are clean.'"—*See page* 162.



"He turned once more to peer between the tree-trunks towards the dark loom of the building. And as he peered two brilliant lights swept and swung towards him."

THE ENEMY WITHIN

By PHILIP RANSOM

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

SCAIF, dextrous with gloved hands from the practice of years, slid a long, flexible blade between the window-sashes, and worked in a silence which was broken at last by a satisfactory click. To Merrom, at his side on the grass, that small noise in the darkness came like a pistol-shot. Behind them the spinney bordering the lawn was a black mass, which dripped audibly in the misty November night.

Scaif stood, listening alertly, intent on the business in hand, but Merrom shivered. The man's cool efficiency got on his nerves.

He moved restlessly, and Scaif, jerking his head back sharply as if in rebuke, scrutinised the blank face of the house.

Nothing stirred, no light sprang dangerously to life in the sleeping windows—all, in fact, was exactly as it should be. As it had been for Scaif on a hundred dark nights. So Merrom realised, and forced his twitching limbs to discipline. Very different, this, from the petty pilferings to which he was accustomed, and he was sweating long before he perceived that the bottom sash was mysteriously up.

He scrambled awkwardly over the low sill after Scaif, and once more following the other's lead implicitly, stood listening between the curtains. Better even than Scaif, now, he knew where they were—knew most intimately every detail of that silent room. That had been his part of the affair, and his drawings of the house, pored over by Scaif until they were printed on his memory, would guide them both without need of light.

Humanly speaking, the job was fool-proof. An empty house, a duplicate key (another of Merrom's ex-valet contributions), and the stones still, he knew, in the little safe let into the wall upstairs. Fool-proof to the veriest novice, thought Merrom, cursing his nerve-destroying imagination; absolute child's-play to a man like Scaif, of course. Nothing could possibly go wrong—then why be so confoundedly deliberate? Why not walk brazenly upstairs, have done with it, and get out of this infernal house? For it was infernal. . . .

Suddenly he realised that he was left behind, and, dodging in the dark that pie-crust Chippendale table on which in his time he had set so many coffee-cups, he followed with quickened pulse the darker blotch which was Scaif. The door into the hall opened soundlessly, and Merrom edged through it with his elbow shamelessly against the other man's ribs—for company. In the hall the darkness was so intense that Merrom, eyes and imagination straining, felt giddiness sweep down upon him. He leant against Scaif's bulk for an instant, and was conscious of trembling. As he leant he felt that solid bulk shrug itself impatiently, and found something being forced between his lips. He could not refuse it, though he shuddered from the contact of the smooth, gloved hand which swept his mouth as unerringly in the dark as his own might have done. Instinctively he bit on the stuff. Chewing gum! As much as to say, "You poor fish—pull yourself together, can't you!" He felt himself blushing, but for all that chewed gratefully.

Now Scaif was moving again—thank Heaven. Perhaps it would be lighter upstairs in the library. There was the Chinese cabinet on the landing though, old and rickety. Terrible if the pot-bellied warrior crashed betrayingly from the top of it as they passed. Merrom felt he knew that passage best and, seizing Scaif's arm, thrust himself ahead. They were on the landing now, and there, of course, would be the cabinet on his right. He pressed himself against the left-hand wall, away from it. A board complained under his foot, and he stood rigid. From behind him came an impatient shuffle, but he could not move. He simply felt he could not move, in spite of Scaif. And, anyhow, he suddenly hated Scaif. If he jostled him again he would just turn and hit him. But he didn't, and at last Merrom found courage to go on.

Instantly his knee came in terrifying contact with something flimsy, something cool and smooth. It was, he found, a little table, a bamboo table he could not account for, in front of him. Suddenly, inexplicably, he had lost his bearings in the dark as one awakening from a sleep-walk in a strange room. He stepped back, groping behind him now for Scaif's comforting touch, but his hand met nothing. Nor, as he groped in terror, was the solid wall still on his left. Behind and on either side blank nothingness slid through his combing fingers. And that treacherous table in front, ramshackle enough to clatter the dead out of sleep. Perhaps there were other tables he did not know about, perhaps thay had moved all the furniture—a trap!

"Scaif!" he whispered in panic, "oh—Scaif!"

There came no answer, but a hand from the void on his left plucked him through a doorway, the door of the library which he had overshot and Scaif had opened behind him. Of course! Instantly he knew where he was again, and as if by magic the reeling pictures in his brain swung round and orientated themselves to reality.

The safe, disguised to look like the backs of half a dozen books among others in a bookshelf, was behind the door which opened into the room. Just behind the door, before you came to the great writing-desk. The tiny keyhole was between Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and Whiston's *Josephus*, he remembered. All right—but they would need just a flash or two of the electric torch for this. That was all right too, for the heavy curtains were drawn across the windows; he could make out a chink between them as one just less dark line from floor to ceiling. An urgency to get on with this—to get on and get away—shook him. With a stifled curse he sidled round the end of the open door and fumbled for the embossed backs of the books. His hand met something else, something which tottered and, as he grabbed at it, clattered to the floor.

He heard Scaif's quick, intaken breath, and then his own heart galloping.

But for that, silence settled again on the room, on the whole house, like a black pall. He strained his ears to listen, and all the time in his numbed and darkened brain a voice like a great clock ticked a stupid question: "What was it? What was it? What was it?" He tried to shake himself free from this spell—what did it matter what it was? The house was empty. But a cold wind blew through his heart against all

sense—against all reason. Suppose he had made a mistake about that; suppose . . .

A hand fell on his arm, and Merrom bit his lip against the scream that leapt to his throat. But it was Scaif's hand and Scaif's breath at his ear and Scaif's cool whisper:

"All serene—carry on."

A little pool of light splashed waveringly on the red and the gold and the brown of books, and came to rest on the word *Martyrs*. Scaif's hand in its smooth glove dived into that yellow pool, and with a click a row of books swung outwards. A drawer slid silently on rollers, there was a rustle, the snap of a case-fastening, and a faint hard rattle which was quenched in Scaif's pocket. The safe key clicked again, and the light went out.

Merrom felt something cold being pushed into his palm. It was the wooden handle of the long knife-like blade that had forced the window-catch downstairs. He understood. Scaif would want one hand, of course, to guard the stones. He took the tool and nodded, feverishly and futilely, in the dark.

Now they could go—out of this black nightmare, out of this . . . Why was Scaif gripping his elbow like that? Confound the fellow, it hurt! Why—but why were there padding footsteps coming along the landing—why was there a yellow gleam through the hinge of the door—why did he feel sick?

The footsteps stopped short of the door. Merrom moistened his lips. Light was flooding the threshold now, striving feebly with the shadows of the room.

The man, whoever he was, stepped into the doorway, and the light swung and searched. So close to them he stood—only an inch of mahogany away—that Merrom could hear the quick breath coming and going through that man's lips. But he could see nothing of him except the questing light. Scaif's fingers felt like steel on his arm—like steel bands might very well feel on your wrists. . . .

The man moved fully into the room, and Merrom knew him as he turned the light at them. But Scaif was on him, and Merrom wanted to cry out. Old Chislett, the butler, a decent fellow . . . but for all that he flung up his right arm and Scaif went down with a noise like a chopper on a block and did not stir.

Merrom was conscious of light blinding his eyes, just conscious of a rushing shadow and the glint of upraised steel above his head, and thrust out, instinctively—screaming—with his right hand. Chislett's rush carried him with its impetus on top of Merrom, but his weapon clanged harmlessly to the ground, and Merrom had an amazed vision of a back-tilted chin—of a man's hand clutching at a man's throat, and blood between the knotted fingers. Then came darkness with the crash of Chislett's body, which bore Merrom down with it.

In that panic darkness he writhed free from the tumbling limbs that seemed to suffocate him, and ran blindly, not to the door (and that silent, waiting house!), but to the tall window—to air and the sky and the stars. Cowering on the broad window-seat behind the curtains, he listened; listened sickly to a coughing struggle on the floor in there. It ceased with a long sigh. That knife in his hand—why had he forgotten about that knife? The long blade seemed to be turning now in his own heart instead of in a man's throat. Old Chislett—a decent fellow. . . .

Nausea claimed him, and then fear, and a wild resentment against Scaif. For nothing stirred in the room. Why didn't Scaif get up? Scaif would know what to do. He listened for his breathing. But the howling of a dog filled his ears, a dog howling somewhere outside in the blessed freedom and air of the night.

In the room was a thick silence. It weighed on everything, it seemed to be pressing the very breath from Merrom's lungs.

"Scaif!" he called. "Scaif!" But there was no answering voice out of the dark.

"Chislett!" he cried again, shrilly. "Chislett—Chislett!" The echoes of that cry through the room and down the empty corridors made him shudder. "Chislett—Chislett!" all through the house—his own voice. That cry, he felt, would go on echoing till it was answered. But Chislett would never answer—nor Scaif. He knew that suddenly. He was alone. Alone, not only here, in this room, but for ever alone in knowledge—that loneliness which makes a man cry out in a crowded street.

This thought plunged him into a stupor of despair, so that for a long time he sat there shivering, fingers interlocked, eyes wide and vacant. Somewhere in the hall below a clock struck. The two deliberate strokes seemed to well up to Merrom in the thickening silence as bubbles do through mud in a stagnant pool. The sound pierced his consciousness, he rose feverishly to his feet. Time—time was precious to him, vital. He

must get away from this terrible room, from this terrible house of darkness. Of darkness—that was it. If only there were light he would be himself again, be able to think.

But there was no light, for Scaif had their torch, and Chislett's light had crashed out. As Merrom realised this a greater desire to see what he had done came upon him. He wanted to see Scaif, to see old Chislett, to see everything, above all things—to see. He pulled aside the curtains and forced himself to think. There was an electric-light switch on the wall close to where he stood—he remembered it. It lit up most of the lights of the room; they might be seen from outside. Never mind. This darkness was creeping into his brain. He must risk light to get out of the place sane. " They that sit in darkness " (what was it ?) " and in the shadow of Death " . . . He was muttering to himself now, " Light, light," as his hand found the switch. He pressed it down sharply, steeling himself. No light came, only the feeblest little click under his fingers.

The breath left his lungs in a great sob. Now in truth he knew fear. That was not fear which had cowered beside him on the window-seat, that was not fear which had made him strike out at Chislett—but this which had him by the neck, this, which thrust him in front of it and hurled him through the darkness, which forced his stumbling, slipping feet over what lay on the floor—this was fear—panic—the madness of fear. . . .

HE found himself lying on the grass under that window by which they had entered. A gentle rain was falling on his face, but the rising wind was bowing the trees of the spinney in great gusts. He roused himself wearily, and a church clock struck the first quarter. Which first quarter he did not know nor care—time was by now to him nothing but a measure of experience. Nevertheless, he leapt to his feet, and ran his hands down his clothes. He was damp and cold, and a sudden spurt of rain in his face warned him.

Overhead a wrack of cloud fled in long tatters across a feeble moon. The wind seemed to blow through his head, clearing his thoughts.

He stood for a long time in the faint light, listening, weighing probabilities, scenting danger, seeking safety. The primitive cunning of the hunted possessed him. He investigated the open window with care, testing the possibilities of the old-fashioned catch. At the third attempt he so arranged the spring, wedged by the blade of his pocket-knife from outside, that it sprang over on being sharply closed. To all appearance the window had been shut and fastened from within.

Nothing of himself remained inside the house, no trace, no clue. Nothing physical to show that he had been there—nothing but those echoes of his voice crying to old Chislett through empty rooms. . . .

He shuddered at this assailing thought, but managed to pull himself out of the quagmire of fear which once more threatened him. At that he was conscious of a glow of self-approval—he was going to get away with this. After all, what would they find ? Scaif with the stones in his pocket and a cracked skull. Scaif with gloved hands, but well-known finger-tips, and Scaif's own knife in Chislett's throat, with every evidence of a fight to the death between two desperate men. And himself by that time swallowed up in London, his connection with Scaif so clandestine and recent as to be unsuspected. For this was the first time he had worked with Scaif. With all that evidence of theft and blood, why suspect the presence of a third man ? Oh yes, he was going to get away with it.

His self-confidence rose again. Very few men, he thought thrillingly, get away with a killing. And here, as if sent by Providence, came the rain to wash out any tell-tale footprints on the grass.

He had no overcoat and could hardly expect to travel inconspicuously to London by an early train if he was soaked to the skin. In search of shelter he made instinctively for the spinney. This was thick, but not thick enough to ward off the deluge which came gustily from the west, and Merrom was desperate once more by the time he found a summer-house set in an open glade by some benefactor of this garden suburb. In this shelter he took refuge, listening gladly now to the pelt and swish of the rain through the trees, and gauging speculatively the rivulets which flowed from the thatch and splashed to the ground outside. Here he stayed, going over and over in his mind the probabilities of the future—now hugging himself at the prospect of escape, now blanched by fear that by some blunder he had betrayed his presence in the house. Within a mile, he knew, was the railway station ; when it was light he would walk there in his grey suit like many a decent citizen, and catch a train to London. It



"Merrom was conscious of light blinding his eyes, just conscious of a rushing shadow and the glint of upraised steel above his head, and thrust out, instinctively—screaming—with his right hand."

would stop raining at dawn. Already a faint translucence of the eastern sky promised that. And the station was in the opposite direction to the house—he need not go near *that* again.

Thinking thus, he turned once more to peer between the tree-trunks towards the dark loom of the building. And as he peered two brilliant lights swept and swung towards him, turned and checked, and lit up the face of the house luridly. He heard the distant throb of an engine through the patter of rain, and could even catch distant voices. Presently, as he watched breathlessly, a ground-floor window lit up—now there was a light upstairs—and now *the* window showed a gleam between those tall curtains.

Merrom's heart froze, and even as it froze he heard the slam of a door, heard the hasty clash and scrape of gears, and saw the wheeling headlights sweep the laurels as the car turned to plunge down the London road.

So it was out already, Merrom thought in frenzy—his dreadful secret out a full twelve hours before its time. What mischief to his safety might not that flying car wreak in the short hour before dawn ?

The house was dark again now, but for the streak of light through those tall curtains. The torment in Merrom's mind racked him between headlong flight, and an obsession to go back and see what *they* had seen, to peer as through their eyes for traces of himself. A man seeking his own spectre, straining to hear the ghost of his own voice cry out upon him.

Slowly the gusty rain gave way to a thinning drizzle, and the thrashing branches overhead sobbed themselves to sleep. For a short while a quiet peace hung over the countryside, but when dawn came there was no dawning except a yellowish glow that oozed through fog.

It was in this unwholesome light that Merrom braced himself to walk to the station. He passed through lanes at first, with the scrawny hedges of suburbia dripping on either hand. Then down a broad black serpent of a road, jet-black and slippery. And here began houses—people's houses, that was the point—detached at first, in their half-acre plots. Then semi-detached, each with a short, winding asphalt path and a blight-stricken privet hedge, and a furtive bit of washing at the back. And finally in rows, quite frankly not detached at all but jostling each other like people.

Merrom eyed their lighted windows balefully through the fog. Pretentious or modest, proud or mean, he felt their hostile eyes upon him. Outlaw already, he saw every man's hand against him. This silent pressure weighed him down.

In Merrom this conflict of guilty consciousness and intellectual security (for he was certain he had left no clue) waged unceasingly with secret devastation. Now he was gritting his teeth and squaring his shoulders and assuring himself, " I shall get away with this "—now cringing at the sudden apparition of a policeman slapping his hands and blowing out his red cheeks under a lamp-post. His two needs at the moment were rest and a secure isolation. He determined to take a first-class ticket to London, only two stations away by the best trains. This decision was dictated by an unacknowledged instinct to restore his self-respect. There had been a time (but that was before the War) when first-class travel was as commonplace to Merrom as a good breakfast.

By some stroke of fortune his arrival at the station synchronised with the approach of a London train. He had just time to book hurriedly, and dash down the platform in search of an empty carriage. He found one, and got in, rather breathlessly, expecting the train to pull out at once. Owing perhaps to the fog, which was becoming more dense, nothing happened, and Merrom, fidgeting in his anxiety to get to London, stepped across the compartment, for it was not a corridor coach, and thrust his head out of the opposite window.

Outside there was nothing to see but a blurred red light above him in front, and the wetly gleaming metals below. Yet Merrom, elbows propped on the ledge of the open window, leaned farther out and took deep breaths of the opaque air, and gazed into the fog. For there, in his mind's eye, he saw a house by a spinney, every detail of which was photographically clear to him—all but one room, which was nothing but a jumble of black and red. . . .

He was recalled by the slamming of a door, and turned, to see with deep disgust that the carriage had now another occupant —an old man. Leaning in and whispering to him was a square-featured fellow in a blue suit and a bowler hat. The old man nodded twice without speaking, a whistle blew, and the bowler hat, with a glance at Merrom, vanished hastily.

The train started, and Merrom sat down with a feeling of utter exhaustion, and closed his eyes. But what his closed eyes

saw was quite intolerable, and he opened them abruptly, to find that the old man had slewed himself round comfortably in his seat, and was regarding him from his diagonally opposite corner of the carriage.

Merrom, with rapid glances, summed him up. A most striking old man, wearing an air of authority. Black eyebrows jutted out over deep-set, brooding eyes which seemed to lurk inscrutably in shadowy sockets.

So much Merrom saw in a swift glance, and shifted his position uneasily. Somehow he could not prolong his examination of this unwelcome fellow passenger. He gazed straight before him, trying to stifle the impatience that possessed him. But the old man's regard, he felt, was turned upon him with such intensity that he was forced against his will to shoot another furtive look at him. In no whit had the other moved. His hands, strong white hands, lay curled in his lap. His feet, in scrupulously polished black shoes, were planted squarely on the floor. Only his head and body were turned to face Merrom. There was in the man's attitude something very much aware—almost listening. And his gaze, in the yellow atmosphere of the carriage, lit by one central lamp in the roof, seemed to riddle Merrom through and through. Nor was it a gaze that one could meet. It passed through you, like the look that a woman can use. It passed through Merrom at the level of his tie, which was grey and knotted round a soft white collar. So much so that he found himself fingering his tie—with those fingers of his which would not lie, curled and content and strongly passive, in his lap, but would twitch and entwine themselves and drum, out of control, upon his knee.

The train stopped with a jerk. The old man's head jerked back in sympathy, but the direction of his gaze did not alter. Merrom rose and peered out of the window. There was nothing to be seen—as he expected—but any excuse was enough to do something. He began to curse the railway for not running corridor trains exclusively.

When he sat down again he dared not look at the man opposite, and felt that he could not breathe. "I won't look at him," he said under his breath, "for five minutes. I won't." With this childish resolve he glanced at his wrist-watch. Its glass was broken, and it had stopped at half-past one. The physical effect of this simple discovery upon him was terrific. Every function of his body seemed to stop. In the ghastly interval before his breath came back and his heart began to beat again, he felt the blood leave his legs, and his hair rise. It really did seem to rise, and he had snatched off his hat before he knew what he was doing. He cast it upon the seat opposite—a soft grey felt hat. The brim was clotted with mud. He stared at it. Of course it was clotted with mud. For the first time he wondered what traces his person bore of his night's work—his hands, for instance? Furtively he examined them. To his overwhelming relief they were clean. As he said this word to himself he admitted what he had been looking for—dreading to see. In reality his hands were muddy. . . .

With a shriek and a roar a train passed them, and Merrom was hypnotised by the rhythmic passage of the lighted windows. Their own train jerked again into life. At this rate, his brain said, we shall never get to London, but he found himself still furtively examining his finger-nails.

He looked up suddenly, and felt that he had almost succeeded in meeting the old man's gaze. He seemed to be smiling faintly. In a paroxysm of self-consciousness Merrom thrust his hands into his trouser pockets—and the smile seemed to deepen through the fog, for a deep furrow ran from cheekbone to jowl on the motionless countenance which was obsessing him.

Merrom reacted to this with a spurt of temper. There was a crumpled newspaper lying on the seat opposite. It was just as near Merrom, just as much his perquisite as the old man's. But he determined to make it an excuse to speak. He felt that there would be something less inhuman about it all if he could induce the old man to speak or to move.

Merrom snatched up the paper jerkily. "Is this your paper, sir?" he heard himself say. "I should be glad to borrow it."

The old man smiled at him. "By all means," he said. "It is not my paper. You are very welcome to it." His voice was deep and strong, and filled the carriage. It was an infinitely patient, big, relentless voice.

Merrom, taking refuge behind the paper, which rustled in his grasp, quite definitely did not wish to elicit that voice again.

Secure behind his shield, he thought—the old devil can't stare at me now. But for all the good it did him that paper might have been turned suddenly to glass. After a moment Merrom's gaze slid round the edge of it to meet—no, never quite to meet—the old man's unfaltering gaze. At the level of his tie, still. A grey tie—a light grey tie—

might easily show a spot of mud, or, at the level of a man's throat, there was nothing a grey tie might not show. . . . Nor a white linen collar, for that matter.

The paper, strained between Merrom's gripping fingers, was rustling like a banana grove in a squall. But now he dared not put it down—not until he had assured himself about something. By cautious peeping he discovered that there was no mirror in the compartment. He sat racking his brains. At last he propped one side of the paper up on his knee and slipped his hand into the pocket which contained his cigarette-case. A silver case, concave and very battered—a relic of the Merrom that had been. In its scratched surface he caught dim glimpses of his frightened eyes, of his nose, ridiculously enlarged, of a mouth that seemed to writhe at him. But no clear image. The jolting train and his trembling hand defeated him. At one moment he thought he saw a dark stain on his tie—or was it on his collar ?—and then could not be sure. And sure—certain—he felt wildly that he must be. He put his cigarette-case away, and lay back exhausted, sweating.

The train stopped casually between two platforms at a suburban station. Merrom tried to look out of the window by his head. He could not see through the steamy glass, but a too faint, bilious reflection of himself seemed to mock him. Impatiently he brushed the glass with his elbow. The reflection vanished, but the face of the square-featured fellow in the blue suit and bowler hat peered in at him.

Merrom recoiled from the glass, clutching his tie, and the man turned abruptly and passed along the platform in his square-toed boots. As the train moved again, a sick knowledge gripped Merrom's heart. They had got him—this bowler-hatted fellow and this grim old man—between them. Not for nothing had that midnight car swung its searching headlights down the London road. No doubt he had been traced, followed, trapped in this narrow carriage. Like a coffin—narrow. You could not expect a man to sit in so narrow a carriage with such a grim custodian watching, gloating, over a spot that was not mud on a desperate man's tie. Frenzy swept him. The palms of his hands were wet and nerveless, and the paper floated to the floor. It was useless anyhow. He had an obsessing impulse to leap from the train—he had every urge to do that—except the courage. For the fog was lifting, and the train gathered speed. In a few minutes they would be in London—in a very few minutes they would have him now.

An insane hatred of Scaif shook him, the hatred of the weak for the strong. It was all Scaif's fault, this nightmare. And Scaif was lucky, he was out of it, and Merrom was to suffer. Just like Scaif. . . . A thousand fantastic thoughts fled through his brain as the lights of the great signal-box slid past and the brakes went on. The train shuddered to a standstill, and Merrom leapt to his feet and fumbled for the handle of the door. It was stiff and he tore at it. It gave with a wrist-jarring shock, but still the door would not open. Merrom battered at it with his fists. He drummed on it. He shot the window down and thrust out his panic-stricken face. A policeman was passing up and down outside. Merrom recoiled, and glanced back into the carriage. The old man was still sitting in his corner, patient as Fate.

"Is the door locked ?" he asked in that deep voice of his.

"Locked——" echoed Merrom shrilly, "locked !"

The policeman stepped ponderously forward, but the bowler-hatted man was before him. He wrenched the door open, and stood in the doorway, looking up at Merrom, who stood paralysed—waiting.

A slight noise behind him made him jerk his head round. The old man had risen.

They had him now—they had him—between them, these two relentless devils !

The policeman had come nearer and halted. He was watching tolerantly. His turn would come next.

Merrom snapped.

"I didn't do it !" he screamed feebly, clutching at his throat. "It was Scaif—Scaif, I tell you. His knife . . . you'll see. It was the blood on my tie—the old devil stares at it so. It spurted—but my hands are clean. . . ." He thrust them out among the tumbling words. "Look—look—it was Scaif—Scaif . . . !"

A touch fell on his shoulder from behind, and that deep voice boomed authoritatively.

"Andrews ?" it said. "Andrews ?"

"Yes, sir," answered the man in the bowler hat. "In a moment, sir." He turned roughly to Merrom.

"Now come, please," he said abruptly, "you must let me help my master out—he's blind, you know."

"Blind !" echoed Merrom. "Blind !"

He shrank back. But that ponderous policeman had been deeply interested. He raised his hand to Merrom.



"When Miss Robson was shown into the room both father and son were amazed. She was a radiant beauty, with the calm assurance of knowing it."

PAYING FOR IT

By DION CLAYTON CALTHROP

ILLUSTRATED BY LINDSAY CABLE

"AND now," said Derrick Hume's father, "what about Art?"

"Not much good," said Derrick.

"You'll admit I've given you the run of your teeth?"

"You have been very kind and patient," Derrick replied. "You dislike pictures, I know."

"No, no, my boy. That I do not. I like pictures which are worth money; I even admire the man who gambles on the public taste; but as far as I can see it takes several hundred years for an artist to get his real price. As you know, the pictures I have bought have gone up at least twenty per cent."

"But you like them."

"I like them, yes; but I don't really like a piece of canvas hanging on my wall doing nothing but earn dead money. It worries me."

"But your collection is very good. I often wonder how you chose it."

"Funny you shouldn't know," said his father; "but then you never knew your mother except as a small boy. You've been wandering about for ten years and we are almost strangers, you and I; and I don't talk much, as a rule, nor do you. Your mother loved pictures. I suppose you got it from her. She bought nearly all my pictures; she had an eye for what was good, and I've got an eye for what is likely to be valuable. She would rather have had a

hundred-pound picture than a five-hundred-pound fur coat. Now let's get to the point. Are you chucking up painting ? "

" It's chucked me, I think," said Derrick. " I've learnt a lot, and I've seen people and places, and now I am nearly ready to come into the business."

Derrick's father got out of his chair and knocked his pipe out into the fire. " You know, my boy," he said very gently, " that this is the deepest wish in my heart. I'm proud of my business ; I'm rather over-proud, because in my day a gentleman wasn't supposed to go into trade. Your uncle Oliver never spoke to me for fourteen years, and when he did it was to borrow money. Your mother was a lady to her finger-tips, but she sat in the cash-desk of my first little place for three years before we were married, and her old mother, Lady Kettling, was a real sport. She hadn't a bean. Kettling had spent the lot before he blew his brains out, but she stuck on somehow, with about three hundred a year, and had the courage to let her daughter work. It took courage in those days to go into a shop, I can tell you. My father cut me out of his will because I wouldn't take a fat family living in a small country town. ' Damn religion,' he said ; ' look at the income.' "

" Why did I never know this before ? " said Derrick.

" Because it wouldn't have interested you," his father replied. " Never go on talking to a man who isn't listening. So you are nearly ready to come into the business. Why ' nearly ' ? "

" I want to see shops and shopping."

" You can see that in my places."

" Yes, father, but through your eyes. I want to do two thousand pounds' worth of shopping."

" Buy a car."

" No ; small shopping. From what I have seen, it isn't rich people who are real shoppers ; they just buy. I believe I would rather have forty sixpences cash than one pound on credit."

" You must give credit, my lad, and for this reason : ninety-five people out of a hundred are honest in small cash. Then there is Fashion : if you are not very careful your shop will be stocked with unsaleable clothes."

" What do you call Fashion ? " Derrick asked.

" The Bedouin spirit in women. They are restless. They want to experience themselves in new clothes. They never know what suits them. They ask their friends, ' Do you think blue would suit me ? ' Now, I have worked in every department in my stores here ; not in all the five hundred branch stores—they are only echoes of this one—and I always find that a man comes in to buy and a woman to spend. She comes in with the idea of possibly spending a shilling ; our job is to make her spend five. Then comes our difficulty : more than a third of the women who come into our stores come in to look round ; they make an appointment with a friend at—say—the glove-counter ; they haven't come to buy gloves, they have come to talk. Have you spotted my novelty-girls ? "

" I can't say I have."

" Good idea," said Derrick's father. " Every twenty minutes they go through the refreshment-room with a tray with odds and ends on it ; a waitress meets them and says, ' I haven't seen them before. They are pretty.' ' Only just come in,' says the novelty-girl, and you can bet your life that some woman asks to look at them, fingers them and asks the price. The girl leaves the tray on the table, saying she will find out the price, as she has not yet been told. That gives the women a good five minutes' look. I've sold any amount of things in the tea-room I couldn't sell in the shop."

" I've got to learn these things first-hand. I must become a shopper. I've thought it all out, father. I want to take a woman shopping with me in London, Paris, Milan, Berlin and Vienna."

" Why not New York, Tokio and Melbourne ? " said his father, laughing.

" I'm serious."

" Is the young woman serious ? "

" I don't know her."

" Are you going to my Employment Bureau to ask for a shopping companion ? Because, on those terms, the whole of my female staff would offer their services."

" Don't business men take secretaries away with them ? "

" Yes, but a wise man sees that they are so old and ugly that no scandal is possible. The idea has its merits, but——" He shook his head.

" Miss Robson will be waiting downstairs by now," said his son, after glancing at his watch. " Will you see her ? "

" Who exactly is Miss Robson ? "

" I don't know. She may not do. I telephoned. . . ."

"I'm glad you say 'telephoned' and not ''phoned,' which I think is the height of vulgarity. Well?"

"To an Employment Bureau—not yours. I told them exactly what I wanted and they said they would send Miss Robson—shorthand, typing, speaks French, German and Italian; daughter of General Bullifant Robson; aged twenty-three."

"The world's changed," said Derrick's father. "Heaven send she's ugly. Ring the bell, my boy, and let's see the goods."

When Miss Robson was shown into the room both father and son were amazed. She was a radiant beauty, with the calm assurance of knowing it. A little above average woman's height, perfect features, golden-brown hair and violet eyes. She made the room seem a little faded.

"Mr. Hume?" she said.

"My son requires a secretary," said Derrick's father. "If you will excuse me . . ." He bowed and left the room.

The girl opened a business-like bag, produced note-book and pencil, and took the nearest chair.

"Miss Robson," said Derrick Hume, "I have rather an unusual job I want to offer you. Are you prepared to go abroad?"

"Where, and for how long?" she answered.

"Certainly four months."

"Far?"

"Paris, Milan, Berlin and Vienna. We finish up with a month of London."

"The firm told me it was a long job."

"The question of payment," said Derrick Hume, "will, I hope, be satisfactory. All your hotel bills will, of course, be paid; your salary will be twelve pounds a week, and with luck you will be the best-dressed woman in Europe." He smiled as he added: "There will be no jewellery."

"Am I to take this seriously?" she asked calmly.

"Let me tell you exactly what I want you to do if you consent. I want to know how and why women shop; what they choose, why they choose it—that is, why they pick on a certain thing. My father, as you may know, is a shopkeeper on a very big scale, but I am convinced that his method is not exactly old-fashioned but that it is beginning to lack the feminine touch. I feel that to-day there must be a certain charm in creating successful trade. I don't say women have altered, but I feel their outlook has changed. We sell everything, from pins to motor-cars; we have a system, as you may know, of supplying you from the cradle to the grave. And we are not in the cheap market. My idea is to create a new series of shops which I propose calling 'The Little Woman.' In my shop experience I have so often heard women ask one another if they know of 'a little woman,' someone who makes chair-covers, blouses, turns dresses, mends stockings, knows what to do with stains on the carpet, knows of a carpenter who will put up shelves or keep draughts out of the house. Do you understand? Do you agree?"

"What do I do?" she asked.

"You travel with me as my secretary, and you shop. For instance, there is a lot of talk about the marvellous taste of Frenchwomen; I am inclined to doubt it. There is no doubt that the Englishman is the best-dressed man in the world; every nation tries to copy us; but I am more than a little sceptical about 'the latest thing from Paris.' I rather think it is a very clever bogey. Do you notice that the best dressmakers and the best cooks are all men?"

"But not all English men," said Miss Robson.

"Quite true. The best hotel-keepers are mostly Swiss; that is in the *hôtel de luxe*; the best waiters are Italian; the best plain cooking is to be found in the French commercial hotels; but London is really the shopping centre of the world, and that is why I want to experience the foreign methods of setting out their goods, learn what I can from them, and apply the knowledge here. Take my father's shops, for instance. There is too much to look at; there is no quiet place in which to rest; the provision department takes away my appetite. I go in to look round, and I come out crushed. But I believe that women like the excitement of a crowd; that's the trick, as I call it, of sales. Women, who are very parsimonious, love to think they have bought something for next to nothing; they do not realise that half they buy at a sale was unsaleable, or manufactured expressly for the sale."

"It should be very interesting," said the girl, almost in a reverie.

"Shopkeeping is an art," said Derrick. "I never realised till a month or so ago what romance lay behind big trade. Now I want to come in where the very expensive shop and the very cheap shop fail to realise that the moderate purse is often the proudest; where a woman can shop who can only



afford a few good things a year, at a reasonable price, and I am quite ready to take seven and a half per cent. profit instead of twelve. I am going into business, and I want to begin at the beginning. If you accept my offer, I will write you a contract now and hand you a cheque for fifty pounds. We start in a fortnight."

"Isn't it rather precipitate?" she asked.

"If you had been the wrong person this interview would have lasted five minutes only."

"It is a great temptation."

"Then you accept?" He took up a pen. "By the way, what is your Christian name?"

"Adrica."

"Unusual. You can terminate this agree-



"A week later they were sitting in the Café de la Paix.

"'I could shop better in London, but not so amusingly,' she said. 'I sort of feel that Paris is not the Mecca it once was to women.'"

ment by mutual consent at any time in three days."

"You know nothing about me."

"That shall entirely depend on what you can tell me. I hope you will stay to lunch. My father always lunches at home, and he is the most delightful person in the world."

"At what time?"

"Half-past one. By the way, would cash be more convenient? If so, I can get this cheque cashed for you, or, at least, I'll write out another and let you have the money before lunch."

"This isn't a dream, is it?" she asked, smiling.

"It is a business proposition."

"Well, cash would be more convenient." She rose and held out her hand. "At half-past one," she said, as they both moved to the door.

Adrica Robson was a shrewd young woman, and had need to be, seeing that she was thrust on to a hard world at eighteen, with only sixty pounds a year, no relations and only the prospect of fighting with thousands of others for the few jobs. This, when she came to think about it after lunch, was a job which might lead anywhere far beyond the secretarial work. She thanked her lucky stars that her father had taught her languages from the age of six. He had been a man of learning but not of selling. He tried to market his brains, but always failed; the same thing happened with his money, so that he died almost a pauper. A man of learning who became a General very early in Army life, and a mother of real beauty and charm, had produced, in the quaintness of life, a business-like daughter. Here was Adrica, at twenty-three, going on what looked like a wild-cat scheme with a very attractive young man. Derrick was attractive. He had boyish enthusiasm, he looked like an athlete, dressed well, had a voice with a note of gentle command in it. Adrica felt that people did the things that Derrick Hume told them to do; they found themselves doing them.

Good idea or bad idea, it is rather fun to walk into a strange house with four-and-sixpence in your purse and come out with fifty pounds. Her mind flew to shoes, luggage, a permanent wave, simple medicines, a nice dressing-gown. After all, she had a fortnight, and she felt she ought to save at least a hundred and twenty pounds in the four months, and with the knowledge gained . . . ?

She went back to her rooms and told her landlady she would be away for some time; then she went to the office and told the head. The head was a masculine-looking woman who said over the top of her spectacles: "You're rather strikingly pretty to do this, my dear."

"But," said Adrica, "what a chance!"

"Look after yourself," said the head. "I think you will. Your head's screwed on the right way, but . . ." Her fingers drummed on the desk. "If there are any difficulties, come straight back to me. I'm fond of you, child. Good luck to you. Don't send me picture-postcards—I hate them. Send me a letter or two."

When Adrica had closed the door and crossed the passage to the typing-room, she would have been very surprised if she had known that Miss Ketering, the head, was earnestly praying for her.

Once on board the boat, Adrica had really time to think. Twenty years ago this affair would have been regarded as an unofficial honeymoon. Now——? Anyhow, she wasn't ill, and Derrick only once came near her to ask if she had all she wanted. In the train he talked. "Do you know Paris?" he asked.

"As a schoolgirl," she replied; "and that means, of course, the Miss side of Paris: the Opera, the Louvre, that sort of thing—what my father used to call Shakespeare and the Musical Glasses. Would you tell me exactly what I am to do?"

"I want you to consider yourself a young woman who has come into a small legacy, who has always longed to have pretty things and never has been able to afford them. A girl who, without expensive tastes, has taste. I want you to tell me how much it costs to have your hair dressed, your nails manicured, the price of bath-salts, powder. Can you—how can I put it?—stand up tip to toe all new and neat for a year on a hundred pounds? I want you to pay cash and keep every bill; and I want to come shopping with you."

"There are things——" she said.

"I know, I know," he answered quietly. "You'll buy those by yourself, not forgetting that 'things' are in every shop-window and newspaper advertisement, and that the only thing left to man's imagination is how women can wear so little and keep warm, or so much and keep cool."

"It seems all very jolly and very strange," she said; "but can it really help your business?"



" The young man's voice shook when he said, ' Adrica darling, how did you know how to tell me ? ' "

"If I were a serious Art critic, I should go to every great collection I could, and learn how to appreciate not only the great Masters but the schools which gave rise to them. In my business I have to study a thing which nearly doesn't exist, but always persists, and that is Fashion. In the first place, it has nothing to do with taste: you have only to go back a few years to see that. It has very little to do with history, except for a limp, a scarred neck, or a pimple—all three things have made the history of appearances. But it has the most extraordinary effect on nations: in the twinkling of an eye an entire nation changes its clothes. Your mother, for instance, would have thought you almost immodest in what you wear, but only for a few weeks. Fancy a red flannel petticoat! Fancy elastic-sided boots being smart. Lunch-time, I think."

A week later they were sitting in the Café de la Paix, and Derrick said: "Well?"

"I could shop better in London, but not so amusingly," she said. "I sort of feel that Paris is not the Mecca it once was to women. Gloves and shoes, perhaps, and a few ideas. Jewellery bad; very good hats, but everything rather posterish, a bit lipsticky."

"You look very smart."

"I think that is more freedom than clothes."

"That touch of colour."

"That," said Adrica, "is where the French are so clever; just in that touch of colour."

"Forgive the shopman talking," said Derrick, "but do you think I could sell 'that touch of colour'?"

"No, you can't sell genius. I bought this to-day; it is called '*Chat*.' Very feminine, isn't it?" She showed him a fur bag. "Open it," she said, smiling.

"It contains, so far as I can see, all the weapons of coquetry—what we call a 'vanity-bag.' But what is the new idea?"

"The name—'Cat.' A neat little cut at us. And besides, listen." She pressed two buttons in the bag.

"It purrs!" he cried. "By Jingo, we'll buy the lot."

Some weeks later, in Milan, Adrica was purring herself. "I know now what it is to be really well dressed," she said. "And I also know other people know I am, so that's why I shall hate giving it up."

"You won't have to," said Derrick.

"As a woman, I want to know why," she said; "but as a secretary, I suppose I mustn't ask."

"I have been working the scheme of my 'Little Woman' shops, and you appear in the scheme as manager at a thousand a year."

"Unfortunately . . ." she began.

"Fortunately, it is settled. I can guess what you are thinking of. Figures. They will not concern you. You will supply taste, ideas; in fact, you and I are going to be the imaginative department. It is surprising how few big shops have any imagination. On the whole, I think men are better catered for than women, because they are better customers. Look at the difference in the price of a man's haircut and a woman's. Look at my shirt; properly washed, it will last for ten years."

"Would you like the same vase of flowers to last ten years, or make the time always May?"

"I'm not sure," he answered.

"I am," said Adrica. "If we women didn't change, you would be bored with us. But am I really to have this position and a thousand a year?"

"If you accept it."

"What should I do?" she asked.

"Fashion, as I am always preaching, is a weathercock; the least puff, and it changes. Well, you are to be the clerk of the weather. It will be partly your job to find out, say, whether bags are getting bigger or smaller, hats being trimmed or remaining plain. You will watch fashions rise and die. We must be in before the christening and out before the funeral. You will have every good woman's paper to read and a designer to work for you. I will supply the goods. I have learned a lot from you, Adrica, but not enough yet."

"Where have I failed?" she asked.

"You smite me with the knowledge that I am too impersonal; that is very good for business, but big business is romance, and I can see myself working out the cost of romance. I see that the price of a dream may be very expensive."

"Vision has no price," she said quietly. "No sum can buy a sunset or a friend."

"We have grown to be friends," he answered.

"Yes, we have," said Adrica.

"I know what we want," he said suddenly. "We want a holiday; we want two weeks' holiday, and no shopping. From this moment you cease to be my secretary for

two weeks. Where shall we go? I bar cities; that's all."

"Once when I was a little girl I went to a place called La Grave, up in the mountains above Grenoble; and there's such a good cake-shop in Grenoble."

"To-morrow morning, at nine o'clock, we start," said Derrick. "I'll get a car. Can you be ready by nine? We leave all our heavy stuff and call for it. I shall just tell the chauffeur to drive to the best cake-shop in Grenoble. This makes me feel almost a kid. Not one more word about shops or shopping for two whole weeks. I had almost forgotten it was Spring, and all the jolly little mountain flowers will be out. I bet you two lire I'm up and ready before you."

When they were driving the next day, Derrick stopped the car at a quarter to twelve by a group of trees. "We get out here," he said. "This is my new restaurant."

She noticed that the driver took several parcels from beside him and placed them in the shade. He then drove away.

"In an hour," said Derrick. "He's going off to an inn he knows; we are eating here. Now you sit down on the rug and watch me. You owe me two lire by the way; I was up at six—hence the lunch. Cold sole, awfully good; *pâté de foie*; new rolls, observe; chicken all cut up; cheese and peaches and coffee in a Thermos-flask; and, mark you, a bottle of Asti. Two napkins, knives and forks and spoons. Is it a good idea?"

"Lovely. But how did you do it?"

"Flattery and cash. There you are. There is even a box of chocolates for you. I didn't think of that; our hotel man thought of that."

"Enchantment!" she answered, laughing. "It's so very like a fairy-story, where you wave a wand or are given a wish. Who thought of cold sole?"

"I did," he said. "It's much better than cold salmon. Just this bit of salad makes the difference."

They finished their lunch and sat smoking.

"Somehow, I wish this could always go on: the open space, the shade of the trees, no shops."

"Yes," she whispered. "It doesn't seem fair to be going back to cities; but, at the same time, I know I should get woolly-minded. This sort of Arcadian life wouldn't be half such fun if one always had it. But, oh dear! one does want to know it's there and to be able to escape."

"We have been having a luxury trip," said Derrick, "but I have worked out all my scheme. I have seen how women shop expensively and poorly. Often while you have been resting I have been about in the big cheap shops. Well, we swore off talking shop, and here am I doing it."

Suddenly she leaned down and kissed the ground. "France," she said, "I love you."

The young man's voice shook when he said, "Adrica darling, how did you know how to tell me?"

"Suddenly France said, 'Tell him,'" she answered.

"Let's build a house round this tree," said Derrick, "and we'll sell penny packets of sweets to children."

"And give away flowers," she said dreamily.

"I expect it's a long way from a tobacconist's," said Derrick.

"If we must wrap our emotions in paper parcels, at least we can have coloured string," said Adrica.

"Shop!" said he, laughing. Then he took her in his arms.

The hoot of the returning car brought the world about their ears.

"At least we've got a good excuse for coming back here for our next honeymoon," said he.

"And we'll make the 'Little Woman' shops a hobby," said Adrica.

"Yes, little woman," said he.

AN EPITAPH.

GOD hath two arms,
One circled me
From birth, and I,
Mistakenly,
Said "It is Life."

Then, after, He
Foreseeing harm,
Folded me with
His other arm,
You say "'Tis Death."

ELSIE L. TAYLOR.

o

BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS

By OLIVER MADOX HUEFFER

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN W. NICOLSON

THEY were gazing intently at the entrance to the railway tunnel in the mountain-side below them. A veil of grey smoke was eddying slowly from it, to fade as slowly against the sheer green wall that overhung it.

"It looks as though the Effanque were angry," said Petit-Pierre with a smile that was half sorrowful. "Someone must be trying to steal its treasure."

"Like the one Grandpère Sigognac used to tell me about when I was little," agreed Berthe. "It lived in a cave near the Quatre Vents, and one day there was a wedding and the procession passed near the cave, and when the Effanque heard the fiddles and the *cornemuses* playing, it put its head out of the cave and——"

"I know. And while it was following the music a shepherd stole its treasure, and when it came back it wept and its cries echoed among the mountains. I can almost hear it." The boy's lips moved and he seemed to be listening to something very far away.

"But no good came to the shepherd, because he kept the treasure for himself and did not share it with his best friend, as you must, Grandpère Sigognac said, if you find an Effanque's treasure."

Petit-Pierre, absorbed in the musical agony of the bereaved Effanque, was not listening. "If only she hadn't broken my fiddle," he murmured, with a sudden gush of tears, "I would play it to you now—the music of the wedding-party and the Effanque sorrowing and the wind hissing among the pine-needles and——" He let his face fall on to Berthe's lap and sobbed unrestrainedly.

"Never mind." She laid a comforting palm upon his head. "Père Alphonse says that he can make it just as good as ever. I will fetch it for you this afternoon and then you shall play it to me." She glanced at where the shadow of the juniper-bush had touched the edge of the rocky outcrop before them. "See—it is midday and you must hurry home or La Megère will make it a reason to beat you again. We will meet again, at six o'clock, by the water-tank, and you shall have your fiddle."

Petit-Pierre scrambled to his feet, his face paling, and with only a brief word of understanding hurried down the hillside towards the village. Berthe sat up on end and gazed after him with an expression that, for all her twelve years and his parity in age, had in it something maternal. He was so small and puny, a head shorter than Berthe, and so incapable of caring for himself. The village children, to say nothing of their elders, called him an "innocent" and bullied him appropriately, just as they called Berthe, with her long slender limbs, her bronzed skin and the dark blue eyes that could flash so furiously, the Cata-mountain. The gossips had it that she was the one creature on earth whom La Megère feared, La Megère, who was the village virago into whose hands an unkind fate had delivered Petit-Pierre. On one remembered occasion when she was thrashing him, Berthe had attacked her with a carpenter's chisel borrowed from Père Gaubert's workshop and had fairly driven her from her prey. Public opinion was, of course, on the side of La Megère, Petit-Pierre being, so to put it, her property, to treat as she would. Was he not an orphan, the child of some wandering fiddler or other, who had put him in La Megère's charge against certain sums to be paid monthly, and had not the payments stopped within a year? Was she not accordingly amply justified in paying herself as she thought fit? He was an exasperating child at that, the gossips agreed, with his head full of music and such-like flummeries,

doing nothing right. He had even tried to run away more than once, and each time the whole village took part in the pursuit and stood by, gravely approving, while he received the punishment due to such audacity. As to Berthe Sigognac—well—she was of the Mountain—that mysterious wilderness which to the Santogeots of the Plain seems peopled with savages and worse.

Berthe watched him until he reached the angle of the hillside and paused to wave his arm to her; then, letting herself slip down, face forward, on the heathery turf, directed her gaze once more downwards towards the tunnel-mouth, as though awaiting something.



"The boy's lips moved and he seemed to be listening to something very far away."

It had always fascinated her, that dark patch against the green hillside, ever since, as a little girl of six, she came down from the Mountain to live with Tante Adèle, after her parents' deaths. Within half an hour of her arrival she rushed into the house, crying, "*Viens, ma tante*—a great Effanque is stealing the village! It is dragging it to its cave in the mountain! Come quickly to save it." And although Tante Adèle laughed at her and told her, when she had leisure, all about railways and locomotives and tunnels and the things that are, and about the absurdity of believing in Dragons and Effanques and other weird Beasts of the Mountain that are not—at least in the Département of the Deux-Bièvres—did her best, indeed, to drive sense into the obstinate little black tousled head, nevertheless the narrow road with its shining metals, creeping always upwards along the valley-bottom until it vanished so suddenly into the mountain-side, never ceased to hold for her the fascination of the mysterious.

The little house in the valley above Disdon where Tante Adèle lived since her marriage and subsequent widowhood stood on an unfrequented bridle-path half a mile above the hamlet of Disdon-le-Potier, which was itself some twenty miles from Biort, the *chef-lieu* of the Département, in the river-plain below. The single-track railway that climbed the valley was not without its importance, running due north from Biort and serving as northern outlet for the

flourishing iron industry of which that city is the centre. Long heavy goods trains came all day long panting up the steep gradient, creeping always more slowly as they neared the crest of the ascent, throwing up such vast plumes of white steam in the effort as would have shamed the angriest Effanque in all Fairyland. At night, if you happened to be abroad, they were even more thrilling. Lurid shafts of angry red light stretched up above them towards the quiet stars, and the reverberation of their monstrous breathing shook the very roots of the hills, only to die in one intense moment into a gripping memory that dragged the imagination after it through the great eddy of high mountains to the unknown, unimagined countries beyond.

A mighty, distant pulsing throbbed windborne up the valley. Berthe rose from her lair beneath the big juniper-bush and leapt across a patch of dazzling white sunlight to the isolated fir-tree whence she could best command the valley-length. It grew and grew, always faster and more angrily, until the great locomotive, seeming from where Berthe stood no larger than a toy model, toiled slowly into sight round a green buttress and braced itself for the final effort. Behind it lurched and rattled forty-three wagons, an unusually heavy load for one engine, Berthe reflected. Some were empty, or only half laden, awaiting, perhaps, other consignments farther along the line. Berthe noted, idly, that the empty wagons were in the centre of the train, towards the rear-end. She waited until the engine reached the tunnel entrance, watched the last wagon lurch into the smoke-cloud that burst out around it, and only then turned away to descend the hillside, half running and half scrambling, towards the footbridge across the Flèche brook.

The workshop of Père Alphonse, whither she was bound, stood at the bottom of the incline leading up to the village, crouched under the lee of a great rock twice its size, out of which it might have grown, so grey and weather-beaten was it. Père Alphonse, whose other name was Gaubert, was at once carpenter and painter and plasterer and smith, and had, besides, an unexpected insight into the insides of church organs. He had built his house with his own hands, from roof to threshold, thereby adding to his reputation as a master of knowledge better left unknown. In his youth, not content to spend all his days in his native village, like his fathers before him, he rashly ventured as far abroad as Biort itself, presumptuously aspiring, it was whispered, to the priesthood. There, failing in his ambition, he accepted instead the office of handyman to the Cathedral Chapter and, incidentally, though this was only whispered between friends, sold his soul to a Person better left nameless, with whom he used to hold long discussions in the Cathedral bell-loft. Returning, in late middle age, to Disdon, his reputation for forbidden knowledge there preceded him and, but for his undoubted skill in arts less questionable, things might have gone hard with him, for there is no one with a more pronounced dislike of things and persons he does not understand than your peasant of the Santogne. Père Alphonse was tolerated, but suspected, whence perhaps his unequal friendship with little Berthe, herself no less suspect as a foreigner from the Mountain, where sorcery is an everyday affair.

The bare wooden building, brightened only by experimental daubs of bright-coloured paint on lintels and door-post, was empty when Berthe reached it, but with the certainty of experience she passed through the deserted workshop to where the old man sat at a rough working bench in the little stony enclosure that served him as garden, busy with glue and pegs in restoring its shape to a badly battered violin. He looked up with a crinkled smile on his bearded face and motioned his small visitor towards a place beside him in the pleasant shade of a trellised vine.

"You come *apropos, ma mignonne.* In another five minutes I shall have done." He held out the fiddle at arm's length. "I have seen worse. Old Cremona, by the lines of it. Too good, *en effet,* for a child to finger." He chuckled. "Or for a woman to use as club, for that matter."

"It was his father's," said Berthe eagerly. "He was a great musician."

"*Evidemment,*" agreed the old man dryly. "Which is no doubt why he left his child to the charity of a strange woman —and such a woman."

"It is not charity," cried Berthe hotly. "Petit-Pierre works—there is not a man in Disdon who works harder. But—his heart is in his fiddle all the time. Oh, Père Alphonse—they say he is a half-wit—yes, you also. But if you could only hear him playing—when he is alone with me up on the hillside—where he is not afraid—it is as though the angels were singing."

"Angels or no angels, he will soon be half-witted—whatever he is now—if La Megère continues to knock double-knocks at that head of his." He shook his head, half angrily. "The little *chétif*. If he had half the courage of a wood-squirrel he would be a hundred leagues away by now."

"But—he *has* run away. Three times. And each time he was brought back."

"As he deserved to be, *petit chenapan*. Goes trolloping along the Route Nationale for all the world to see! *Parfandiou*—when there is the railway holding its arms out to him all the time. Half-witted—the boy is a stark idiot, I tell you."

"But he has no money. And if he tried to buy a ticket——"

"*M-é-é-é-grandiou*!! Buy a ticket! Is it his business to pay the salaries of MM. the Directors? A ticket! What is to stop him climbing into one of the trucks when a train stops at the water-tank down there and——"

"But—where is he to go to?"

"To go to? And you a child of the Mountain—where they used to have heads on their shoulders when I was a lad. Go? Why, to the other side of the mountains, to be sure." Suddenly his testiness fell from him like a discarded cloak and a reminiscent smile crinkled his face. "*Tiens*—how does it go? 'There—tum ti tum—ta—ta!' Yes—I have it. The song my father used to sing at his work, who had it from his father, whose grandfather was one of the People of the Shirt—the Camisards—the Reformed Religious—who fought the King's armies—over there." He motioned vaguely towards the South and began to hum, in a high, creaking voice, what, in another land, might have passed for a Covenanter's marching-psalm. "There is peace beyond the Mountains—There are fairer lands than—la la la—I forget. At least—beyond the mountains—yes—there are Metz and Strasbourg and the end of the world—and beyond it all—eternal peace, no doubt, when we make up our minds to travel so far."

The light of a new purpose was dawning in Berthe's small face. "But—if Petit-Pierre was afraid."

The testiness came back with a rush. "Afraid—of course he would be afraid. Better go with him and hold his hand for him. *Va!* He deserves all he gets who hasn't the pluck to escape from it. There, *mignonne*, there is the fiddle, as good as new—until La Megère breaks it over his head again. Name of a name—what's that?"

For Berthe had suddenly flung her arms impulsively round him, hugged him ecstatically for an instant and was already running down the road, waving the fiddle and its bow above her head.

Dusk was already falling when Petit-Pierre, casting apprehensive glances over his shoulder, made his cautious way to the patch of gorse-covered waste that edges the railway beside the great water-tank, where he was to meet Berthe. A silent figure rose from a bush to meet him and, with finger on lip, drew him deeper into the thicket. "Do not say a word," she commanded. "Only listen to me. Here is your fiddle. It will play as well as ever, Père Alphonse says."

"But—what is the bundle you are carrying?"

She did not answer, but instead peered into his face. "You have been crying. Has she been beating you again?"

"Because I forgot to fetch the brushwood for the stove. Oh, I cannot bear it. She will kill me. I know she will kill me."

"Chut—she will never beat you again. I—Berthe—promise it. Now listen. Will you do everything I tell you? Yes? It is a promise? Then—there will be a train in half an hour. We are going to travel in it."

"But—Berthe——"

"Everything is arranged. You have only to do what I tell you."

"But—where are we going?"

"We are going to the lands beyond the mountains, where there is always peace, Père Alphonse says."

"Through—through the tunnel, do you mean?"

"Through the cave of the Effanque rather. You shall play to it upon your fiddle. And we will find the treasure. And, mind, whichever of us finds the treasure, shall faithfully promise to share it with the other. *Entendu?* Is it a bargain?"

Thus it was that when, half an hour later, a long goods train panted its way into the tunnel under the Col du Tenon, it bore with it two small, breathless, trembling passengers, hidden beneath a tarpaulin cover in a half-empty open truck, in defiance of all the laws and regulation of the Company. Berthe had chosen her wagon wisely. They had plenty of room; a flap of the tarpaulin folded beneath them

tempered the hardness of the flooring; being in the centre of the long train, they should have little difficulty in escaping unseen when the time came. It is true that the fierce reverberating echoes from the tunnel roof were terrible enough, and that for a time it seemed they must suffocate in the all-enveloping smoke. But the tunnel proved only short, soon opening into a further, higher valley, as did those which succeeded it, and Petit-Pierre seemed to suffer little discomfort. Once when she stretched out her hand, that the friendly touch might reassure him, it was to find him sitting erect against the side of the truck, his fiddle pressed to his chin, improvising something that was inaudible to her in the prevailing din. "It is the tune of the Effanque," he told her when next they rushed out of a cutting into comparative quietude. "I know now exactly how it should go."

It was already daylight when she awoke with a start and threw back the heavy fold of the tarpaulin. She was not conscious of having fallen asleep; she had been blaming herself for leaving home without first telling Tante Adèle. Certainly she would not grieve overmuch, having four children of her own to care for. While Petit-Pierre—he had no one to care for him, and she must—and there was the sunshine dancing in her eyes and Petit-Pierre's sleeping head upon her shoulder, and Disdon far away, hundreds of miles, perhaps, on the other side of the mountains.



"It was the sound of a cracked old fiddle"

Gently shifting the boy's head so as not to rouse him, she peeped cautiously over the edge of the truck. Only then did she realise, so confused she was, that they were no longer in motion. Their truck, with five others, was standing in a grass-grown siding a few hundred yards from a small

red-roofed building that was evidently a station. All round the siding were flat fields, bounded in the very far distance by faint blue mountains. Here and there were copses and isolated trees, through which loomed the roofs and spire of a considerable village. It was still very early, for the birds were twittering their morning prayers and only a few solitary figures in the lonely fields showed that the world was getting afoot.

Berthe untied her little bundle and produced the bread and cold bacon she had brought. She was very thirsty and her skin felt dry and crackly, but water from the nearest brook would put that right.

She roused Petit-Pierre, who sat up with a scream. "No—no—I will be good—a-a-a-h! I—I thought she was beating me. Where are we?"

"We are on the other side of the mountains and La Megère has lost us for ever," Berthe told him joyfully. "Now we have only to find the treasure of the Effanque and the rest will be easy."

Ten minutes later, having escaped unseen from their hiding-place, they took the road, parallel to the railway-line, which led towards the village, discussing as they went what they should do. "We must earn some money," said Berthe wisely. "And then we must——"

"I will play them the Tune of the Effanque," Petit-Pierre declared stoutly. "Just as the Savoyards do at Disdon. There was one a week ago. He was no older than I am and he played on the flute, opposite the Mairie. It was beautiful and he would have earned a great deal, only M. Le Maire was angry and drove him away with threats."



"... and there was Petit-Pierre!"

"Let us hope they will be kinder where we are going," said Berthe doubtfully, beginning to realise some of the difficulties in her path.

"As for you—you must take my hat and hold it out to the people to put money into it. Oh, we shall do very well." There was a new confidence in his voice as he began to realise that his slavery was at an end. "See," he cried as, a few minutes later, they turned an angle of the road and found themselves before a large cottage, with a steep red gable and black-and-white walls, of a style that was strange to them. It was surrounded by a high hedge of roses, with a little green gate in the centre. "It is pretty," said Petit-Pierre. "I like it. We will begin here."

"It is still so early," hesitated Berthe. "If the *patronne* is still abed, she may not thank us."

"At least she will not beat us," insisted Petit-Pierre. "Only kind people can live in such a house." And without awaiting further argument he laid his bow across the strings and began to play, improvising upon the same tune, though Berthe could not know it, which had solaced him in the tunnel.

For a time his playing seemed to have no effect, the curtains of the upper windows remaining obstinately drawn. Suddenly those of the largest window, overlooking the gate, were torn furiously back and a man's face appeared in the opening. There could be no doubt of his anger, for he was waving his arms and shouting something in a language Berthe could not understand. But it was his appearance which most confounded her; never had she seen his like. His face was immense, with a great jutting nose and a wide mouth, while his head was as bald as an egg and like one in shape, the place of egg-cup being taken by the upper part of a bright purple-and-orange silk dressing-gown which, opening and closing as he waved his arms, afforded glimpses of a pyjama suit beneath, no less bright in hue.

"It is the Effanque himself!" cried Berthe, staring at the vision in terrified amazement. "Quick, Petit-Pierre—let us escape."

The boy took no notice; wrapt in the melody he was evoking, he was as oblivious of her as of the man with the egg-shaped head, his eyes closed, his fingers caressing the strings as though they were a living, beloved creature. Berthe knew not what to do, but the problem was solved for her. The strange man's anger seemed to fade almost as fast as it had arisen. He ceased to shout and wave his arms; his face smoothed into an attentive smile. For a long moment he stood motionless, listening, then signing to her to wait, he disappeared from the window.

Petit-Pierre continued to play. The door of the cottage opened and the man came out, still wearing the flamboyant dressing-gown. To Berthe's increasing wonder he was followed by another, his twin in everything, even to the huge nose and the baldness, and wearing a dressing-gown as startling.

They hurried side by side to the gate and opened it. "*Komm mal herein!*" cried one, and then, seeing that he was not understood, repeated his command in passable French. "Come in here and tell us what this means. Who are you? And what is it you are playing at this unearthly time of the day?"

The voice, though friendly in tone, was of the harshest, so that it roused even Petit-Pierre to stare at the new-comers no less amazed than Berthe.

"Continue to play!" said the second man. "And first tell us what it is you are playing."

"It is the lament of the Effanque that has been robbed of its treasure," explained Petit-Pierre. "I made it up myself in the train."

"*Du lieber Gott!*" cried the other man. "It is the Lament of the Something I do not know that has been robbed of its treasure. And he made it up in the train. This is madness. But play, *kleiner Kerl*, play, I tell you!"

"Is it Paganini come to life again, I ask you?" cried his companion, looking at Berthe, but as he spoke in German and she had never heard of Paganini, and was, besides, very much alarmed, she returned no answer.

STRICTLY speaking, the story of Petit-Pierre ends here, because, having at last escaped from his bondage and found his way to the lands beyond the mountains of which Père Alphonse had spoken, he found his Effanque—two of them, indeed—without any delay at all. For the men with the egg-shaped heads were no other than the twin-brothers Grüneisen—Karl and Wilhelm—the great Viennese composers who, their admirers say, have completed the work that Richard Wagner began. They had shut themselves away in the cottage in

Alsace to complete without interruption that masterpiece among operas which is now famous throughout the world as the "*Glitterengel.*" Because they were really great masters they had the power to recognise genius wherever they saw it, and the generosity to accept it without envy or afterthought; and from the moment they heard Petit-Pierre play the Lament of the Effanque in their cottage garden at six o'clock in the morning they acknowledged him as their brother and their equal. They treated him as their son and charged themselves with his upbringing, and if he is to-day as famous even as they are, it is to them that he owes it all. To them and to Berthe, that is to say.

Of Berthe another story must be told. She was not a genius and, as it happened, both the brothers had a horror of women, having perhaps received too much adulation from them, and they cared for nothing in the world but music and naturally could not be expected to feel much interest in a little girl who had no more aptitude for it than had they for, let us say, agriculture. Nevertheless, they did their duty towards her, as they saw it, and for the sake of Pierre, whom she had brought out of bondage, they provided for her and sent her to school and arranged for her future. Petit-Pierre, who was the apple of their four eyes, they carried away with them to Vienna and Paris and wherever his great destiny seemed to call him; but whether they ever gave another thought to Berthe, except when the school-bills fell due, who can say?

Berthe, at least, did not think so, and when she thought of them it was, we must fear, as cruel ogres who had taken Petit-Pierre away from her and were doing their best to make him forget her and how they had started out together, just he and she, to look for the Land beyond the Mountains and the Treasure of the Effanque.

She could not stand it at last. Some might have it that it was jealousy alone that drove her to it, but at least, five years after she had run away from Disdon-le-Potier, she ran away again from her school at Mulheimat-on-the-Rhine, and this time she ran away alone and set out to fend for herself; and because she was of the kind that welcomes difficulties in order to overcome them, she soon found a niche for herself in a millinery business at Epinal in the Vosges; and there it seemed that she might live for the rest of her days without ever hearing more of the ungrateful Petit-Pierre, who had found the Treasure of the Effanque after all and had not shared it with her.

It was late one winter's evening and heavy snow was sweeping down from the mountains. Madame Véronique, who owned the business, had already gone home, and Berthe was just telling the boy to close the shutters, for she was by that time Madame Véronique's second-in-command and took her duties very seriously, as always. And suddenly, from the street, there came to her a sound that made her gasp and turn pale and catch at a corner of the counter to save herself from falling. It was the sound of a cracked old fiddle, played by some street musician, and the tune was the Lament of the Effanque.

Berthe had heard it often before, for it had become a classic, but there was something in the tone of the old racked fiddle that caught at her heart-strings. She went on giving her orders mechanically, and took her hat and wraps and put them on, and said good night with her usual pleasant voice and went out into the street on her way to her lodging—and there was Petit-Pierre!

She saw at once that things had gone very hardly with him, for he was covered with snow and standing at the edge of the kerb, like any other street-player. But all her heart went out to him, and she held out her hands and she said, "My dear, my dear—I have wanted you so! And I knew that you would come back to me!" And Petit-Pierre dropped the cracked fiddle in the snow and sprang to her and caught her in his arms, and he said, "I needed you to take care of me. Just as you always did. And so I came to you."

She took him back into the shop, quite careless of the goggling eyes of the shop-boy, and made him sit down in the velvet chair reserved for the most important customers, and brushed the snow from his shoulders, and knew that he had not changed at all since he slept with his head on her shoulder in the railway truck. And already her head was busy with plans for caring for him and rescuing him from the poverty and want that threatened him, when suddenly the shop-door burst open and another man rushed in, overturning the shop-boy, who was still staring with all his eyes, and almost threw himself at Petit-Pierre's feet. He was a short, dark man, very fat and with greasy hair, and he was wearing a great fur overcoat and a silk hat and his fingers were dirty and covered with glittering rings.

"Oh, Maître!" he kept repeating, almost as though he was a sheep. "Oh, Maître!" And again, "Oh, Maître—thank Heaven I have found you! There is just time to catch the train. The car is waiting."

Petit-Pierre sprang to his feet. "How dare you follow me?" he cried, in a voice that made the fat man tremble all over. "Did I not tell you I wanted to be alone?"

"But, Maître—oh, Maître—there is not half an hour to catch the Paris train. And—the concert—the President of the Republic is to be there—and Kings—three Kings—what will they say—if you keep them waiting—if you disappoint them? It will mean ruin! Oh, Maître, that you should seek to hide yourself like this!"

"Let them wait!" stormed Petit-Pierre even more furiously. "What are they to me? Have I not been seeking my happiness for two years—oh, my dear, my dear, why did you hide yourself away from me who love you so? And just when I have at last found her—not even knowing whether she loved me, and trusting myself to the divine pity with which her heart is full—you must come and prate to me about your Kings and Presidents. Away with you!"

The fat man cast desperate eyes towards Heaven, as for inspiration, and, finding it, cast himself outright on his knees before Berthe. "Oh, Madame, speak to him, I beg—I entreat you! I am his manager—his *impresario*. I have arranged everything—the greatest concert—the most wonderful, superb occasion—to play before—all the Kings of the Earth assembled in Paris to hear him! And, oh, Horror of Horrors! only the day before—some man comes to him—and he leaves everything—to follow him! It is by the merest chance that I am here in time—to find him—in rags—mad—driven mad by his success! Speak to him—I pray you. Oh, Maître! M-a-î-t-r-e!! Ma--î--t--r--e!!!" And the fat man caught at Berthe's skirt and sobbed outright.

Petit-Pierre was holding Berthe very close to his heart, ignoring the shop-boy, who was sitting up on end staring at him as though turned to stone. "It is true, my dearest," he told her. "I have had detectives searching for you ever since you went away from me, and only yesterday one of them found you. And because I was afraid that you did not love me, who love you so dearly, I came to ask your pity, knowing that you would be my guardian angel as you always were." He turned towards the fat man, who had risen to his feet and seemed to be trying to lift himself from the ground by his hair. "You want to know why I came here," he said, with a wonderful smile on his face. "I came to look for the Treasure of the Effanque. And I have found it. And, this time, I am not going to share it with anyone."

Of course the fat man did not understand. But Berthe did, which was the one thing that mattered. And the rest you can imagine for yourself.

WINTER RAINS.

NOW the wind is away to the westward
To harry the last leaves clear
And to scatter far down to the eastward
A pall on the year.

Now meadows and woodland ways I've trodden,
Through copse and beckoning lane,
Lie bleak to the sky and meanly sodden;
Lashed by the rain.

The plough stands lone in the rain-soaked furrow,
The kine thrust close in the byre;
And fields are left for the lair and burrow
Or warmth of the fire.

The year is dead: but new life springs after,
And happy at heart I bide,
For I have known in a world of laughter
The English countryside.

D. PARODE.

DISCOVERY

By ETHEL M. RADBOURNE

ILLUSTRATED BY EILEEN HARRIS

HE was the final expression of the commonplace. Nothing about him offered scope for imagination. In the first half-hour's talk you could place him with precision—honest, plodding, always to be counted on for steady virtue. And dull—Esther Clinford used the word as her final summing up of Richard Smith. Even his name lacked flavour. "Mrs. Richard Smith" as a vocal description would have no distinction. Her maiden name had at least some hint of individuality.

Richard Smith had waited on the side-walk whilst these thoughts materialised in Esther's mind. She gave him the core of them now in a crisp—

"It's impossible, Richard."

"I've always hoped to marry you," Richard stated. "I should make you a good husband, though I say it myself. You'd always know where to find me."

"That's it." Her retort came instantly. "That's partly why it's impossible. I'd like a man who isn't always calculable."

She saw him wince at her phrasing—but the wincing made no difference to the adoration of his eyes. She could stab without risk of retaliation. Faithful and commonplace—the two words were the man in entirety.

"It's no use, Richard." They had reached a place where the road forked to left and right, and she pointed to this division of ways. "That's a symbol. You for one path and I for the other."

She had at last been final in her decision. So far she had dallied. Richard Smith's love-making had seemed better than stagnation in a country town. But dalliance could not last, and even Richard refused to hang permanently in a balance of indecision. He swung on his heel now with a gesture not entirely lacking in dignity.

The road Esther followed merged presently into a woodland track. She glanced back over her shoulder at the huddle of roofs in the distance. Here in the woods she had a feeling of escape from boredom. Trees were companionable in their way. She stooped to dabble her fingers in a running brook; erect again, and realising solitude, she began to dance, mimicking the vagaries of wind-ordered tree branches. Under her breath she hummed snatches of songs. The woods and her mood called to romance. She was prepared for it as a laid fire for a match.

She was not surprised when her solitude was broken presently. Her instincts warned her that romance, so far tardy, was now hard on her heels.

The new-comer's voice was attractive. She compared it with Richard's slow utterances.

"Miss Clinford—or rather Spirit of the Wood. Ordinary terms don't match you to-day."

"They don't." She agreed eagerly. Here was somebody who understood her. "Moods—to-day I've a mood of rebellion."

"It suits you. And I don't blame you. You're not the kind to be imprisoned in a country town."

For the hundredth time she was appraising this man Renton. He had an uncle in business in the little town and had come this last year to give temporary help to the old man. He was used to cities; he had travelled; life for him held no narrow horizons. He was a mere bird of passage now—once the old man's affairs were settled and the business disposed of he would go again. He was not made to fit a narrow mould.

"Some day you'll escape from this," Renton was saying. "Say that the captive Princess will be rescued by an armoured knight."

Something in his voice thrilled her. She was afraid suddenly to meet his eyes.

"It's unthinkable that you'll stay here. Some man of the city will claim you."

The pause, lengthening, held messages.

They were vivid-hued strands across the drab stuff of the commonplace.

"That fellow Smith," Renton ventured. "He presumes, doesn't he? He dreams of pulling a star down to his earth?"

That was a word-picture of Richard exactly as she saw him. She felt that it *was* almost a case of star and earth-clod. To-day dreams were the only realities. Renton's attitude was one of assurance; she saw him as the devout but self-confident lover. Already during the months of their friendship he had used phrases that left her in no doubt as to his desire.

"You're a caged bird," Renton said. "But cage doors can be opened."

She saw hers opening now. The little town when they came back to it had an air of unfamiliarity. It was as if, dreaming of escape, she saw it from a new angle. Richard's face, seen for a moment in passing, escaped this touch of strangeness. Richard was always Richard. Caged or free, she could think of him in set terms of personality.

"Richard looks down in the mouth," Renton laughed. "He'd like to challenge me to mortal combat."

Renton to-night was in the mood she liked best in him. He had an air of complete security. Esther thought of him as a strong man, practically immovable. He would carve his own destiny. He was a hero of fiction come amazingly out of the printed page. She felt uplifted, exalted. Renton's companionship went like wine to her head.

At the door of her father's house Renton left her. In the open window of the sitting-room old Thomas Clinford's head could be seen, nodding over his paper. He came to attention quickly when Esther entered the room.

"That fellow Renton again. I never liked him. Don't listen to folly, Esther."

"Folly?" She laughed at the word and tossed it aside.

"He's no good," Clinford muttered. "No good. Flirts with a girl and turns her head—when he can find one fool enough for the job. There's nothing stable in him."

She took her hat off and stood in front of a glass arranging her hair. Renton liked her hair; he had compared it to a dozen things of loveliness. Her hands too—he waxed eloquent over their shape and beauty. It was a pity to coarsen them with housework.

"He's been amusing himself long enough," Clinford said, "considering he's an engaged man."

She swung round from the glass, staring.

"It's true. Old Baxter, Renton's uncle, told me so to-day. Baxter said he'd had a letter from the girl's people—a friendly sort of letter saying before Renton left they'd like to send greeting to the old uncle. They hoped he'd come to the wedding some day. . . . Oh, it's true enough." Clinford answered Esther's look. "Baxter showed me the letter. Renton only flirted with you, but Baxter has an idea you've been taking him seriously."

It was traitorous of her tongue to be mute when she needed it. She fought silence in vain.

"That's the worst of these little towns," Clinford said. "The whole place will be laughing up its sleeve. 'A little fool,' they'll say, 'not to have seen the fellow was amusing himself when he found time heavy on his hands.'"

Fool—she put the cap on with a wry face. Instinct told her it was no use to doubt Clinford's story. He had seen the letter. Old Baxter was to be trusted. *Renton himself?* The past months seemed literally to have life and gestures before her eyes. They jeered at her for not knowing fact from fancy. A few tricks of manner had turned her head.

From the window she glanced over her shoulder, meeting her father's eyes.

"I've been a little fool," she said aloud.

Clinford nodded agreement. "But you're taking the right line now. Pull yourself together and put a bold face on it. Folks will soon cease to snigger if they see you've got yourself in hand."

She began to move about the room, setting a meal. To be normal was as easy as to climb the Alps, but she essayed it. Her smart must be hidden. She had a sense of rehearsal, as if her father were audience to her first appearance on the boards. All her movements seemed unreal and forced. It was absurd to prepare a meal and serve it. Commonplace happenings were painted background to the reality of her own anger. How Renton must have been laughing up his sleeve! From head to foot she tingled; flails of self-contempt were heavy on her shoulders.

Someone was knocking at the sitting-room door.

"Come in," Clinford called over his shoulder. Then in surprise, "Hullo, Baxter."

"You're at tea? But I'll not make excuses. I want to see you—both of you."

Baxter glanced hurriedly at Esther, who had made a movement towards the door. "Don't go, Esther."

Baxter was a little shrivelled man in his seventies. He had short-sighted eyes through which he peered now at the two Clinfords.

"I've come to talk about Renton," he said hurriedly. "He's no good. I've found out things to-day." He glanced at Esther. "If a man's a knave in one thing he's often a knave in another."

Glancing at the wall opposite Esther saw three shadows flung across the wall. Her father and Baxter were close together and Baxter's hands were moving in grotesque fashion. Her own shadow was a little apart, motionless and tense. As Baxter's voice ran on, that odd reflection of his hands seemed of import, as if they used a whip.

"I've gone into my books to-day. I'm old—in my dotage, Renton thinks. But I'm keen still. I can track a rogue. Something that took place yesterday set me wondering. Till then I'd trusted, been a blind bat. Old fool I was! He's deceived me."

Baxter leant forward till his mouth was against Clinford's ear.

"I could set the law on to him. A word from me and the police would be on his trail."

Baxter's whisperings were heavily audible.



"'Miss Clinford—or rather Spirit of the Wood. Ordinary terms don't match you to-day.'"

They seemed to echo in every corner of the room. The gestures of his hands were still full of portent; clenched, they suggested the shutting and locking of a cell door.

Baxter suddenly addressed Esther.

"He played with you. He thought you a country girl, easily led on a string. You were dazzled, eh? You thought he was in earnest, eh?" Baxter watched the hot blood mount to Esther's face. "Well, hold your head up now. He's nothing but rubbish."

To-day's impacts left her breathless. Within a few hours she had compassed a wide circle of experience.

"He's nothing but riff-raff," Baxter summed up, still eyeing Esther.

She had an uncontrollable desire to get away from the two men. She busied herself in the kitchen, forcing herself to activity. The way they stared at her—sympathisingly—set her tingling. She had been a fool, and they knew it. She had mistaken a mirage for actuality. "The whole place will be laughing up its sleeve," Clinford had said.

Renton would not laugh—now. Baxter's discovery would send him hot-foot from the place. Even if the old man kept silence Renton would know himself detected.

She could hear her father and Baxter talking together in the passage. Presently the front door opened and she saw them step into the street. She drew a breath of relief. To-night she shrank from the sound of their tongues as flails.

SHADOWS began to veil the street as she stared into it. People passing were blurred shapes, only half distinct. Sound, too, seemed muffled—as if the turmoil of her thoughts half deafened her. It was a few minutes before she realised one persistent sound. There was someone at the side door. She went quickly to open it. Renton stood on the step. Almost before she had realised his presence he stepped inside, closing the door behind him. In the half-light of the passage they stared at each other.

When she would have spoken he moved towards the stair-foot.

"Hush! Don't speak yet."

She saw him glance to right and left. The kitchen door stood open, and without waiting for her invitation he went inside. He crossed to the far corner that was out of range of the window. All his movements were furtive. He was the palsied shadow of the Renton she had known.

She threw her head back, staring at him; her scorn whipped him even in silence.

"It's for an hour or two only," he whispered. "Sanctuary—that's what I'm asking."

"Why?" she asked.

She saw him flinch. But his emergency drove him to a few staccato sentences.

"Just for to-night . . . a little misunderstanding . . . till it's explained I want to get out of the place . . . after dark . . . He'll not think I would come here."

That last was illumination. Clinford's "The whole place will be laughing up its sleeve" echoed in her ears. He had played with her and Baxter knew it; he wouldn't look for Renton in the Clinfords' house. She laughed suddenly.

"I see. A safe hiding-place."

He tried to placate her, glancing uneasily from left to right. His sentences were the veriest futility; he might as well have been dumb. The only eloquent thing was his fear. She could read him now. He had made her a laughing-stock—and therefore this house spelt safety. It was the last place in the town likely to give him shelter.

The wind in a blustering mood tweaked at the window fastenings and set the window rattling. In the track of the wind came a confused medley of sounds.

"What's that?" He moved still further into his shadowed corner.

"Only the wind," she told him. "You're safe—for the present."

He eyed her with relief. "Esther . . . you're a good girl. Perhaps, some day . . . *What is that?*"

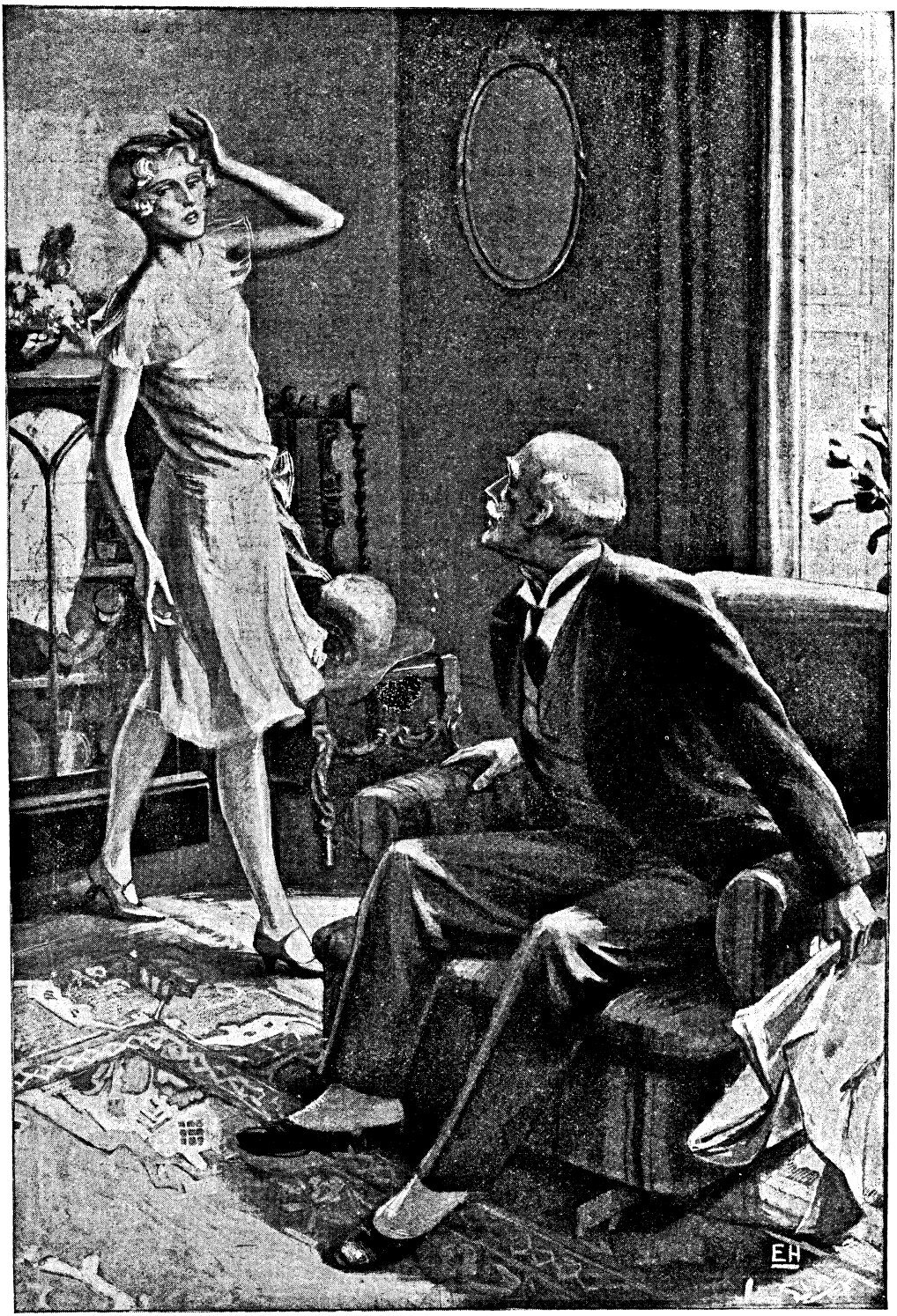
It was Clinford back again with Baxter. They came together to the kitchen door and stared into the shadows.

"Renton's gone," Baxter said. "He knew his time was up. Well, a good riddance. It's the best thing he could have done. If I'd seen him face to face I'd have set the law on his track. He knew me, the rascal. Once out of my sight he trusts to my folly to be silent. I'm a soft-hearted fool. But I'd not trust myself if I saw that false face of his again."

Esther was looking down at her hands, holding them palms upwards as if they held some invisible weights. She was studying them carefully. A moment's silence held an air of Fate. She had only to speak, to jerk a hand over her shoulder and say, "Renton's there, in the shadows. . . ."

"Well, he's gone." Baxter broke silence presently. "He's got safe away. Best so, perhaps."

She heard her father and Baxter go back



"'He's been amusing himself long enough,' Clinford said, 'considering he's an engaged man.'"

to the sitting-room and close the door. There was a minute of tense stillness before Renton moved.

"Esther . . . you little brick. You——" He was at her side, bending to her ear. "I swear to you, Esther, I'll repay you. If you'll have me I'll marry you and let the other one go. You deserve the best I can give."

"The best?" She put her hands to her mouth to silence laughter. "Marriage—with *you*? See here." She went to the kitchen door, opened it, peered up and down for solitude and found it. "You're safe. You'd better hurry. You're so poor a thing one can only pity. But *marriage*—with a pigmy?"

He had gone. She threw door and window wide to cleanse the place of his presence. She drew another long quivering breath of relief. *Discovery*—the word thrilled her. She knew now that she had never loved him. Some fool's corner of her nature had been momentarily dazzled.

She heard her father talking to someone at the front door. Presently he came to the kitchen and called her.

"Are you there, Esther? Here's a note Richard Smith left."

She struck a match and lighted the gas. Standing under it she stared at Richard's carefully penned sentences.

"I'm made in a permanent mould, Esther. I've a fancy even after this afternoon there may some day come a chance for me. In any case I can't let the day end without signing myself,

RICHARD, THE FAITHFUL."

She took pen and paper and wrote quickly.

"To-day I've reached Discovery."

She hesitated then. He was Richard—not quick to interpret. She owed it to him to speak plainly.

"I've discovered that I need rock to build on. You're firm rock, Richard. You're *stable*—I've learnt to love the word."

She slipped hat and coat on and went to the sitting-room door.

"I'm going out for a few minutes." She pointed to the letter in her hand. "An answer to Richard's note."

"There's only one answer he wants," Clinford chuckled.

"That's the answer he's getting," Esther told him.

THE OLD LADY'S PARROT.

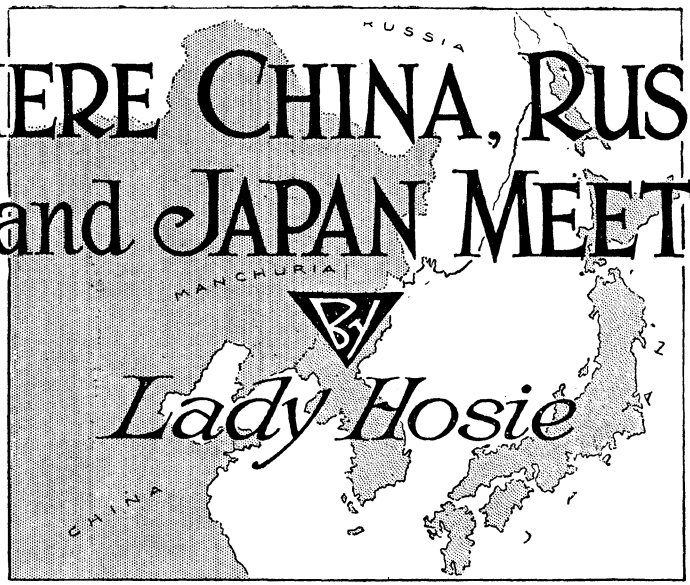
PRETTY Polly! Pretty Polly!
Moulting, moping, melancholy!
Once so lovely, once so jolly!
Pretty Polly! Pretty Polly!

Once a picture to behold,
Blue and emerald and gold!
Once so young and bright of eye,
Pert and proud, and trim and spry!
Just a little overweening,
Peacock-like your feathers preening,
How we loved to hear your chatter—
Foolish words, perhaps, no matter!
Once, ah! once, we loved you so,
Once, but that was long ago!

Pretty Polly! Pretty Polly!
Moulting, moping, melancholy!
Once so lovely, once so jolly!
Pretty Polly! Pretty Polly!
Vanity is worse than folly!

FRED W. BAYLISS.

WHERE CHINA, RUSSIA and JAPAN MEET



By Lady Hosie

ALL Gaul was divided into four parts, and all Manchuria is divided into three. Large parts, too, considering that Manchuria is twice the size of Germany. In the southern portion Japan is very much to the fore: in the northern, Russia comes a-creeping down: and as yet in the centre province of Kirin China reigns more or less undisputedly. The Chinese do not call Manchuria by that name: to them it is "the Three Eastern Provinces." For two centuries it was forbidden land to them; for it was the home of the Manchus who conquered China in the middle of the seventeenth century. The ancestral tablets of the dynasty were housed near Moukden; and at the bi-annual sacrifices the Chinese administrators of the province, who represented the throne at the ceremonies, prostrated themselves at the open door of the shrine. They might not enter such holy precincts.

Nevertheless, the Chinese peasant being a percolating species of human being, there has always been a certain number of his kind tilling the fields in the southernmost of the Three Provinces. The capital of the centre province of Kirin lies on the Sungari River, and has a Chinese name which means "Dockyard," because of the great number of boats which are built or repaired for traffic on that river. The southernmost province is called Fengtien, which name is another instance of that Chinese flair for poetical nomenclature which so delights the occidental ear. Fengtien—the province in which Russia and Japan fought in 1904—means "Adoring Heaven."

The most northerly province, Heilungkiang, has perhaps the most picturesque name of all—Black Dragon River. Some say this refers to the Amur, the great slow river which sweeps round and about the province and shows layers of black rock in parts of its course. But I myself have the idea that the Black Dragon is the brooding cold of the North, with its dark winters. Indeed, for generations Heilungkiang was the Outer Darkness as far as China was concerned. It was the abode of trappers, nomads, and Fish-skin Tatars, whose speech is even yet understood of nobody but a solitary Lettish professor who lives at Riga. During the ages of Chinese history, only wild tribesmen came out of the unpleasant Northern wastes, and then always to harry and pillage. When the Russians carved the Primorsk province of Eastern Siberia out for themselves, the Chinese made no particular trouble over the matter.

To Heilungkiang—the province of the Black Dragon River—were banished such Ministers of State as offended their Majesties in Peking. In a tin-lined packing-case in our attic lie some scrolls rolled up, and supposed to have been drawn with a huge brush by certain of these Majesties themselves:



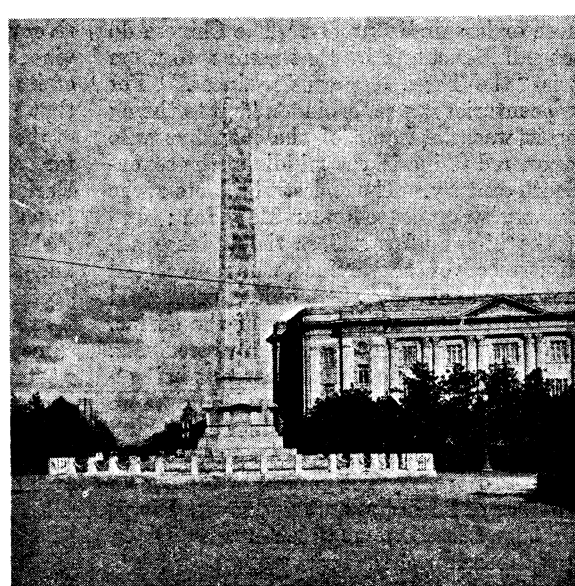
BRITISH CONSULATE, NEWCHWANG.

and very well done they are. One of them represents the ideograph for a tiger, drawn a little like that beast himself, with a long barred tail splashing through the centre—as if he had turned his back. Another similarly represents the king of creatures, the great dragon; and he swirls mystically about as if in his loved clouds.

They were given to my husband by a Chinese lady, when he was British Consul at Newchwang, which was for many years the only "Open Port" for foreign trade and residence in Manchuria. She had been a lady-in-waiting to the late Empress Dowager, Tzŭ Hsi: and eventually had been handed as a wife to one of the Empress's favourite eunuchs. But in due course the eunuch was accused, perhaps rightfully, though naturally the lady did not admit this, of such vast peculations as roused Imperial ire. In a rage his Mistress banished him to Heilungkiang, the Botany Bay of the Chinese court: and for ever. If he delayed, he would be strangled. So humiliating, so full of anguish was the prospect of that bleak wilderness, so lacking in all culture and in everything that makes life sweet to a city-bred Chinese courtier, that he almost hesitated over the alternative.

With his family and his servants, sorrowing, he came to Newchwang: and also with a considerable sum of money and much treasure accumulated during his years of prosperity. This he had contrived to keep hidden from the keen-nosed sequestrators who fell upon his house at Imperial bidding. With a land of wild men and beasts looming before him, he put his goods for safe keeping into the hands of a British firm. Very flattering to us, that. Then he set forth again to exile with his entourage: bumping in the springless carts of those days; over the ice-bound fields which showed their stubble after the millet harvest, and were often better going than the ruts of the shocking roads.

After a year or two of eating out his heart, he began to wonder if the Majesty in Peking had forgiven him: or would perhaps conveniently forget his unfortunate errors in finance. So, alone, he went back. Alas, for fallen favourites! His Mistress remembered nothing about him but his sins. He was caught; he was beheaded. A terrible punishment to a Chinese, worse than strangulation, because his body—head away from shoulders—would be represented for all eternity by a mutilated spiritual counterpart in the next world. Headlessness would stigmatise him with everlasting disgrace. The Chinese peasants of Weihaiwei will con-

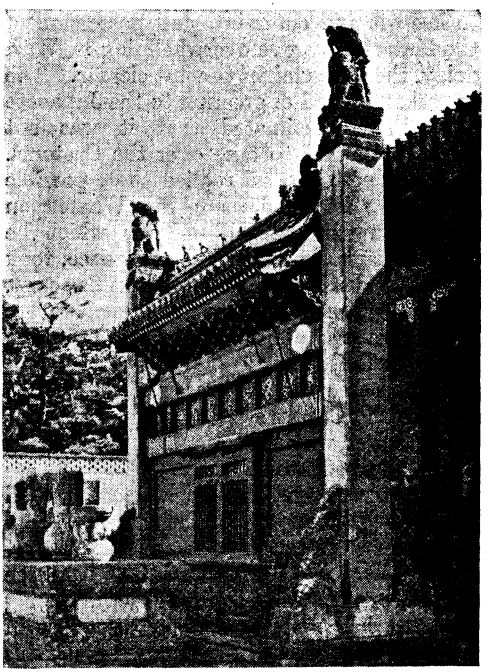


MEMORIAL TO THE JAPANESE WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR, MOUKDEN.

done and hide murder, if it is mere poisoning, rather than let the corpse of the victim be further rent by the mutilations of a post-mortem.

The widow, hearing of his end, came down after a while to Newchwang, to claim at least her widow's portion. Now, although the firm which held her property in its strong-room was a British firm, its only representative in those parts was a Chinese : a compradore, as he is called. And he, I regret to say, saw a golden opportunity for feathering his own nest. He declared that he had no knowledge of any goods deposited with him by any eunuch of the name of Wang. The lady, however, had lived in Peking, and in a court, and was not to be fooled. She knew of the existence of foreign consuls : and round she came to my husband with her tale. " Show me the receipt for your boxes," said he.

She drew it from out of her bosom : and upon it was the stamp—or " chop " as we say in China—of the British firm. He took it and sent it to the headquarters in Shanghai :



DOOR OF THE TOMB OF THE FIRST MANCHU EMPEROR, MOUKDEN.



RUSSIAN CHURCH, HARBIN.

for it was a very great firm out East. And the wicked compradore was dismissed, and the widow received her goods—just as in a story-book. In her exceeding gratitude, she would have showered many portions of those goods, which bore unmistakable traces of Palace origin, upon the British consul who had seen justice done for her. She could hardly believe that their acceptance was forbidden to him. Finally, she sent round the scrolls mentioned before, and left the city without more ado for unknown destinations.

That was many years ago : soon after the Japanese had fought China over the Korean question. In that Chinese-Japanese War of 1894 the ill-prepared Chinese troops had little chance against the Japanese with their determined forces. Rifles were new to them : and they marched past the British consulate, thousands of them, with the leather-protectors still over the stocks, just as the rifles had been sent out by the manufacturers. They did not know how to load their guns. The officers rode ten miles behind, in sedan-chairs. Things are very different now. But naturally such troops were beaten by their enemies. They retreated and fled, as any troops would do in such circumstances : though this did not prevent them from pasting placards up in the cities on the road of retreat, for the Japanese to peruse as they followed hard on their heels : " You wait till we catch you—you dwarfs ! " For such is the nickname by which the Chinese have jeered at the Japanese for many

centuries—during their long jealousies and many wars and raids upon each other.

The "dwarfs," however, reached Newchwang. As they approached the city by the north, the Chinese civil authorities left by the south. During the interregnum, pandemonium reigned, and the evil-livers of the city began to rob the shops of the richer citizens, smashing down the shutters. The Chinese merchants sought the one official person remaining, the British consul. So he put on his brave lace, cocked hat and feathers, just as a Chinese magistrate used to robe himself in his garments of state to overawe a mob, and marched forth to quell the ill-disposed. With him went a couple of naval officers from the miniature gun-boat which had been sent to the port to come to the aid of British residents if necessary. One of these officers had a Japanese servant, a "Boy" who had been kept on board in those rather close quarters for some weeks, lest his nationality bring him into harm. Unostentatiously he now joined the three uniformed British, for he was tired of durance: and walked behind, modestly, as was decorous. The consul was addressing energetically and forcefully some looters, who ceased a moment from their base practices to look upon his insignia of office, when groans came from behind. Behold, the Japanese Boy, forsaking moral suasion, with a large iron crow-bar was felling to the ground any and every Chinese in sight, looter or looted. Scandalised, his masters snatched the crow-bar from him and banished him back to his ship's quarters.



A JAPANESE SCHOOLBOY, MOUKDEN.

News came that the Japanese were entering, and that they had declared their intention of seizing the Customs house as fair spoils of war. The Maritime Customs of China, however, are like no other in the world. They were founded by foreigners, at the wish of the Chinese Government: and their revenues are pledged for various international loans. Any interference works havoc. Also if the Japanese could seize the Customs, where would they stop? And where would be the Treaty Rights of other nations in the port, and that principle of the Open Door for which Britain had stood for so many decades? If once a foreign nation held by force of arms the Gateway into Manchuria, would not the temptation to keep it and enter into full possession of the hinterland prove overwhelming? With delay, the issues might become clearer. The consul sent word of greeting to the Japanese general and intimated that it was not possible for him to take over the Customs. The Japanese general replied that, possible or not, he intended to do it. Whereupon the consul, in the full uniform which he loathed so heartily in times of peace, took down the British flag from his own flag-post, walked across with it under his arm to the Customs house, ran it up, and stood beneath to await callers.

There came the Japanese major deputed to take the Customs house: and he naturally inquired why the British flag was flying over China's Customs house.

"Because," said the British consul, "all Customs property is bought and registered in the name of Sir Robert Hart, its Inspector-General, who is a British subject. When he informs our mutual representatives in Peking that he has registered it in the name of anyone else, we will discuss again this matter of Japan's taking over the Customs house."

The unfortunate major, a subordinate, pleaded: he raged. He had to go away. And the Customs house was saved for China. In fact, later, the Japanese army commander was reprimanded by his own Government for having exceeded discretion. Japan, he was told, was fighting China but did not wish international complications at the same time. The consul, representative of England, received the thanks of the Chinese Government: a curious situation. He was very proud of those thanks. He had shown that portions of China could not be alienated without notice taken!

But gradually pressure from the North grew. All down the peninsula, as far as Korea, it was Russia whom people began to fear. It seemed as if Manchuria must fall into her hand. Count Witte had persuaded Li Hung-chang to allow the building of the Trans-Manchurian Railway in the North. This saved Russia from the long railway journey round the northern bend of the Amur, when she wanted to reach Vladivostok. The dreadful doings of the Boxers in 1900 gave her every excuse to entrench herself in Manchuria. In 1901, when peace came and the other Allied troops withdrew, Russian generals maintained forces well in the south of Manchuria, despite agreements to the contrary. Eventually, at Newchwang, still the one port open for foreign trade and residence, they announced that, lest there be any recrudescence of trouble, they intended to administer Newchwang and they would appoint an administrator.

China was lying spent with that Boxer madness which had been looked at askance by her best sons and cleverest statesmen. Having defended Newchwang against Japanese militarists, the same British consul had now to face Russians of a like mind. He had only the same weapons: gold lace, a cocked hat, a tongue, and a sense of justice. The new administrator arrived, a charming Russian gentleman, and the two met at a dinner-party.

"You will be coming to call upon me soon," smiled the Russian; "and it will be a pleasure to meet again."

"It is the custom out here in the East for the new-comer to call first," replied the consul suavely.

"But, I suppose, seeing that an administrator is a trifle higher in rank than a consul, he should be called upon, eh?" suggested the Russian.

"Certainly," riposted the consul. "Long ago I paid my call upon the administrator here in Newchwang, the Chinese Taotai—quite a nice man."

The battle of wit went on for many weeks. The case was taken to Peking; to St. Petersburg and London—gold lace against gold lace. Which should call first? Had it been up there in Heilungkiang—the Black Dragon River—who knows if Britain had not wavered? But one fine morning the Russian received orders that he was to pay the first call. When later he and my husband became good friends, he admitted that he had been very sore and disappointed. He called, in full state, in full uniform; very stiff. The next morning the consul dressed himself up once more in his fine feathers, to lay his small piece of paste-board on the desk of the Russian bearing the words, "H.B.M. Consular Service, China." It had been made plain that Russia had no more right to administer portions of uncovenanted Manchurian soil than Japan.

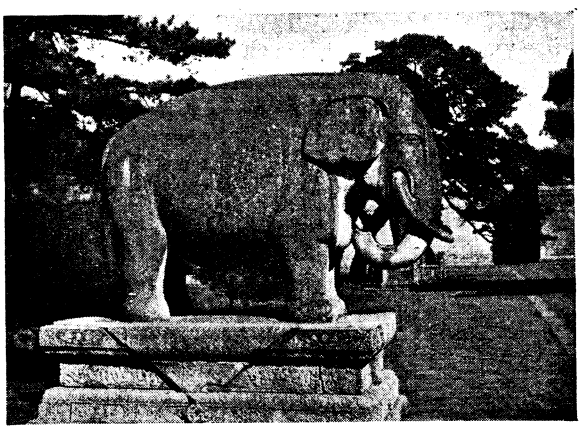
So much for ancient history: but to understand the present, one must dig into



JAPAN, RUSSIA AND CHINA MEET IN MANCHURIA.

A Japanese photographer and his wife: an old Russian woman and boy begging; and a Chinese pulling a rickshaw.

the past. The see-saw is still swinging, between Russia in the north and Japan in the south, with China as the pivot in the centre, so to speak. Nowadays the question is wrapped up inextricably with the railway system of Manchuria. Little more than thirty years ago the first sod of railway foundation was cut, and to-day Manchuria possesses almost half the railway mileage of all China. One of the most luxurious lines in the world is that which runs from Dairen to Moukden, the South Manchuria Railway, which is administered by Japanese officials appointed by the Japanese Government. For Japan, after her defeat of Russia in 1906, fell heir to the solidly-built Russian line. In the cushioned spotless Pullman cars now affected by the Japanese, my mother and I not so long ago sat opposite



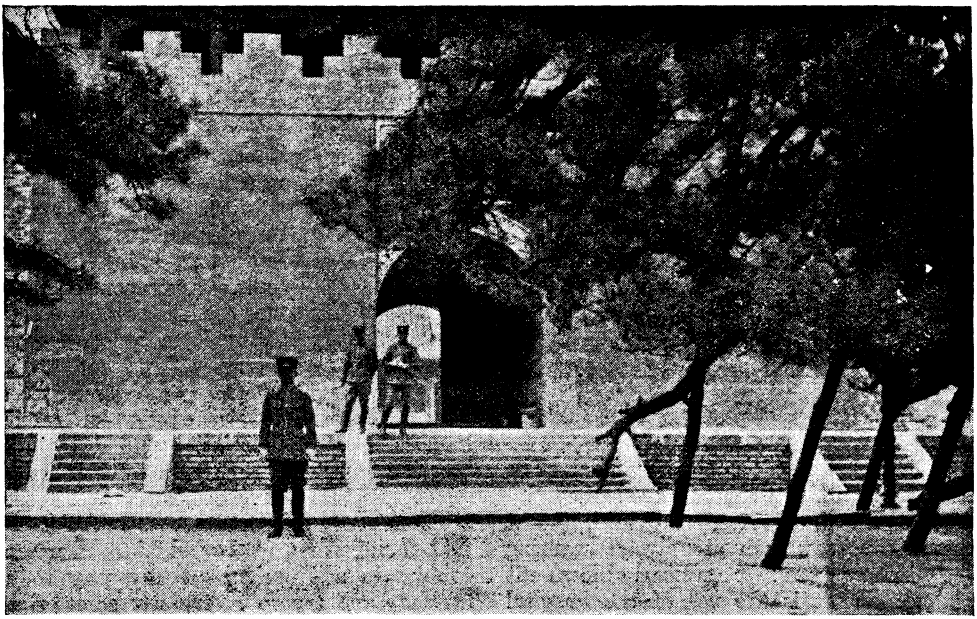
A STONE ELEPHANT AT THE MANCHU ANCESTRAL TOMBS IN MOUKDEN.

two Japanese gentlemen who might have been clothed by Jermyn Street, so perfect was the cut of their lounge suits, so studied the harmony of silk socks and tie. We could have dined in excellent European style in the restaurant car: and these Japanese gentlemen did. But, desirous of tasting the joys of travel *à la japonnaise*, we had bought at a junction buffet two small packets of Japanese food. To the interest of our Japanese *vis-à-vis*, these we proceeded to open and enjoy, while they went to eat beef *à l'anglaise*, which costs five shillings.

And what a difference in the prices of our respective tiffins! The rosy, cheerful, plump Japanese waitress at the buffet, with whom we communicated by signs, had been making up such packages for Japanese travellers. When we saw their daintiness and the succulence of their contents, we intimated that we also were purchasers. A packet costing thirty sen, made of thin, clean white wood, contained a portion of hot white rice in one compartment, with condiments—dried fish, a red pepper saturated in some relish, and other unknown but pleasing viands—in another. A packet with more rice and a greater variety of relishes cost 50 sen—about a shilling, that meant. We realised that two packets at 30 sen were ample for two women: but decided on extravagance and ordered one packet at 30 and another at 50 sen. That is the worst of Japanese life: one is constantly tempted to small extravagances!

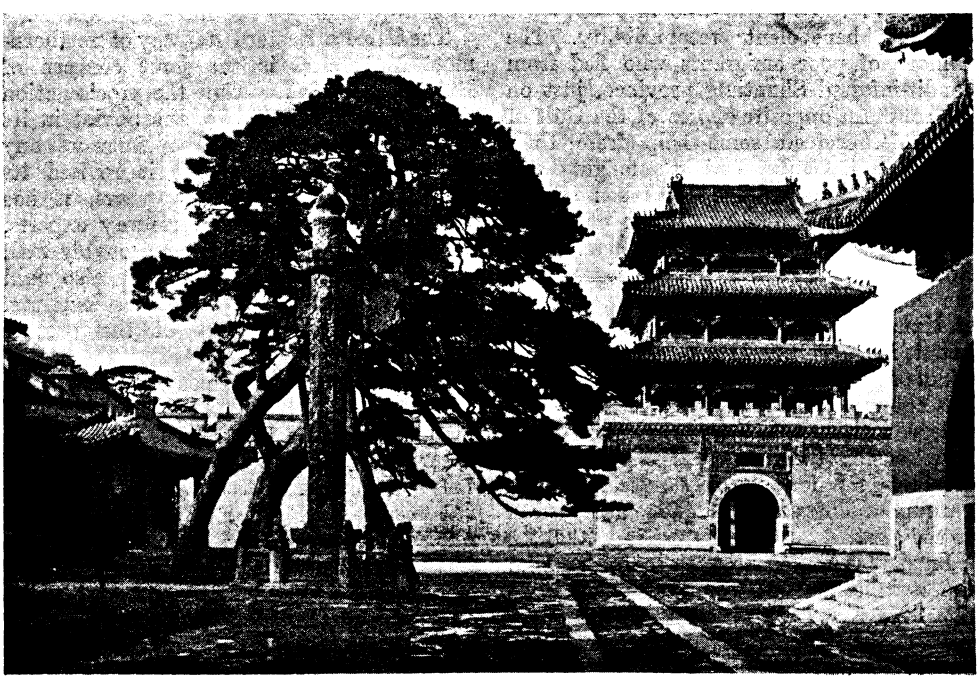
Before we were permitted to buy tickets on this Japanese railway, we had to be inoculated against bubonic plague. For we were coming out of China; from Newchwang, where plague had been reported. The Japanese have good reasons to be strict in their plague regulations, and some complain that they are too strict at times. The railway provided a fully-qualified inoculator at the station, and crowds of Chinese and Korean poorer passengers were duly being treated in the respective waiting-rooms. If we desired greater privacy and liked to pay the vast sum of 45 sen—nearly a shilling—we might be inoculated in luxury at the railway company's hospital. Once again, we fell to this extravagance: partly perhaps because we wanted to see how Modern Japan organises its hospitals. The Japanese doctor—who inoculated us in the shoulder instead of the arm—was sitting at a table with instruments about him when we appeared. We were introduced into his shining laboratory by one of the innumerable little bustling Japanese nurses who flock in Manchurian hospitals like droves of doves. Quaint she looked: for she wore foreign nursing attire—but of the fashion of some twenty years ago, and with a German tradition about it. Her long gathered skirts swept the floor: her waist was tightly encased by a starched belt: her fluted cap was perched at the back of her black hair with its heavy knot.

Opposite the Japanese doctor sat his Chinese assistant; for in these Japanese hospitals in Manchuria many Chinese students are being trained in Western medicine. Later in their huge Moukden hospital, as I went round the wards, a voice



SOLDIERS AT THE MANCHU EMPERORS' TOMB, MOUKDEN.

suddenly addressed me. A Russian woman was lying, who had had a serious abdominal operation performed by the Japanese surgeon. The other two occupants of the small ward were Chinese women. The Russian spoke to me, in English, because she wished to make that complaint which so many English abroad have heard from the



PRECINCTS OF THE TOMB, MOUKDEN,



OLD RUSSIAN WOMAN BEGGING, HARBIN.

lips of continental fellow-travellers. She looked very ill, or I should have smiled.

"Do tell the doctor," she said, "that these Chinese women are always wanting the windows open! I am nearly blown out of bed. What is the use of the hospital spending so much money on coal and heating apparatus if these Chinese open the windows?"

In Mid-Manchuria, as one goes farther North, one is delivered over from the Japanese-run railways to those administered by Chinese: and one must admit they are not so well-run. Nevertheless, there are Chinese in those parts who also have the idea of benevolent responsibility. The millions of poor emigrants who fled from bandit-infested Shantung province, just on the southern opposite shores of the Gulf of Pechihli, received some help from their countrymen. Only a night's lodging and two meals at Moukden, perhaps: but a godsend to this endless stream of ruined peasants seeking the free lands far in the North. At Changchun, the junction set in the huge unhedged fields so characteristic of Manchuria, where the soya-bean is collected in vast quantities, there are two middle-aged Chinese brothers. Merchants but not millionaires, they have founded a college with low fees for the sons of the neighbouring farmers. The boys of their province shall not be wholly divested of that learning which was China's glory and passion in the past.

Finally, one comes by train to Harbin: and is in Russia, it would seem. A huge city, thirty years ago it consisted only of one building, a distillery, and a few huts. Extremely untidy and overgrown it is. Many of its roads are execrable. Two great quarters are crowded with the poverty-stricken, and sanitation is partial. One quarter contains the Chinese migrants: the other the "White" Russians, those unfortunates who fled before the Bolsheviks. But the main streets, which are presentable, are Russian-built. Apartment houses face each other, and shops have stucco fronts after the European style. The roads are paved with cobbles over which rattle droschkies pulled by tall Siberian horses under the arch of their headstalls. Russian advertisements and signs are over every door and street. Very helpful I found them, for I would jerk over the cobbles in a droschky on my way to a fur-shop and try to revive my smattering of the Russian alphabet by their means.

Yet the richest and best paying guests in the comfortable hotel was a large family of Chinese. Its head was a railway magnate, or a speculator in soya-bean or timber. Surrounded by his family, he sat at a wide table, the ladies in their bright silks never uttering a word, and rather timidly finding their way amongst the forks and knives.

The Chinese Eastern Railway of northernmost Manchuria is the joint concern of Russia and China. After the proclamation of the Russian Republic, the Soviet in its first flush of generosity half forswore any claim upon it: but later it revised its opinion. For the last few years, it has appointed its own Soviet railway experts, who have organised the line reasonably well. The Chinese say that they have also used their position to propagate Soviet doctrines. Hence the disagreement of the present months.

The Soviet has a peculiar antipathy towards the "White" Russian community, however dire the latter's poverty. But it is not easy for an Anglo-Saxon to pass by some old Russian woman sitting on the pavement begging for a coin. Not only for food does she need it, but even more for fuel when the bitter Manchurian winter closes down. Our last afternoon in Harbin, I was at a camera shop, the proprietor being a Russian. In Moukden my films had been developed by a Japanese, whose wife was at the till. In Newchwang a Chinese had



A CHINESE DROSCHKY DRIVER, HARBIN.

washed them. Science and technical skill fortunately are outside the limits of nationality. In Harbin the Russian was taking from my proffered open purse such coins as he wished to repay himself—for I could not speak to him. A young man of European origin entered, and immediately in English asked if he could be of service. We asked him the Russian for a kettle, as we were just about to set out on our homeward trip across Siberia. He took us to a town-market with hardware displayed on trestle-tables. He was so kind that we invited him to eat with us. Over minced kidney, which he recommended at a little restaurant, he told his story.

He had lost his father in the Great War, and with his mother had then lived with his uncle, a priest. When he was sixteen, the uncle had been shot before his eyes. Somehow he and his mother had reached Vladivostok, where he had found work with some Americans. At that time the Allies were there, helping the Czecho-Slovakian soldiers who had come through from Russia. When he was eighteen, they too had vanished into the unknown. Another homeless soul, an orphan girl of fourteen, had attached herself to the little family circle ; and he was grateful, for his mother was frail. After the Americans went, he could find no work. The Soviet could not approve of a boy who had worked for the Allies. Neither would they give him a passport to leave the country. At last, there seemed nothing to do but steal away as best he could. He had to walk : over bleak mountains. He neared the frontier, choosing by-paths. " Once I thought I was followed. A man behind me kept dodging when I looked back. Presently I found he was a runaway also : and we walked together, which was company." He paused. " Oh, but we had some frights. The worst was one hot afternoon. We saw a man watching us from a hill-top, leaning



HARBIN IN WINTER.



SOLDIERS GUARDING A TRAIN FROM BANDITS IN NORTHERN CHINA.

on a rifle. We ran. How we ran! I thought my heart would burst. For two hours we ran. The sun poured on us. There was no shelter from it or from the man. We wondered why he did not shoot. And then we came to another side of the hill, and stayed a second to look up. And, after all, there was no man. Only a shrivelled tree! But so like a man with a rifle." They soon came to the end of their meagre store of provisions. "But we never bothered. For thirty hours certainly I did not eat. Only I walked."

Finally they reached a Chinese village, and more Chinese villages. Bandits abound in those districts, but they felt safe. Chinese bandits know that White Russians have no money and that nobody will bother to make international trouble over them. Our friend reached Harbin, where he at once sought Americans and they were able to help him. "So," said he simply, "when I hear English spoken, I like to help if I can." Later, his mother and the orphan girl came, by the same way: but he told them not to be too easily frightened.

"I suppose the orphan girl is about twenty now?" I queried tentatively.

"Yes," he assented; then smiled at me. "We were married three months ago."

It seems, then, that whoever administers Manchuria, whether Russia, China or Japan, there are still openings for Romance.

But by far the most romantic thing in all that countryside is the soya-bean. That bean it is, multiplied billions of times, which has brought Manchuria its prosperity: so that the Three Eastern Provinces have become the magnet these last ten years for some ten million Chinese. To Europe comes its oil, which is without peer. It forms the basis of things we use daily without heed or knowledge and as different as artificial butter and explosives, printing-inks and gutta-percha, oil-cake for the winter feeding of our cattle and waterproofing for our mackintoshes on a wet day. The oil goes in tankers to the United States for soap-making.

Enormous quantities Japan takes: and the very residue, pressed into huge cakes like mill-stones for size, she uses as manure to fertilise her fields. It is largely to Japanese enterprise that China owes this mighty traffic in this diminutive treasure of a seed, and her prosperity.

In a shop for agricultural implements in Moukden I saw a photograph of a Chinese peasant mounted triumphantly on a motor-tractor. That pleased me. A new era dawns for Chinese agriculture. But even more pleased I felt in Harbin when a young Chinese peasant drove past me: true, in a ramshackle grimy cart drawn by a shaggy raw horse. But beside him sat a rosy Chinese lassie, shy but smiling: his wife. That was Newer China still.



CHINESE SOLDIERS AT A NORTHERN RAILWAY STATION.



Photograph by] [*Alfred G. Buckham, F.R.P.S.*

SNOW ON THE MOORFOOTS.



JOHN DANIEL II POSES FOR HIS PHOTOGRAPH WITH A GROUP OF SCHOOL CHILDREN.

MY GORILLAS

By ALYSE CUNNINGHAM

Miss Cunningham, the owner of the celebrated gorilla, "John Daniel," by rearing and educating this animal, proved to the world that the gorilla—the most mysterious creature in the jungle—is far from being so ferocious as is generally represented, and incidentally gave him a new mental status in the scientific world.

MANY hair-raising and blood-curdling descriptions have been given of the gorilla. I have been told that these animals cannot be kept in captivity because there is no cage strong enough to hold them. Yet after exhaustive inquiries among natives and well-known gorilla hunters, and from personal experience, I fail to see why these creatures should be worse to handle than any other vegetarian animal.

They rarely attack man, even in the jungle, unless goaded. A well-known gorilla hunter once told me that he often passed a family group resting in the jungle, but the only signs of interest they displayed was a mild curiosity.

Perhaps the explanation is that we know so little about the habits and characteristics of the animal. Not more than a dozen or so have ever reached Europe alive, and even these have not lived more than a few weeks in captivity, and therefore exhaustive study has not been possible.

It is generally assumed that our climate is responsible for these casualties, but this is not true. Gorillas do not like the cold any more than we do, but so long as they have a warm place to retire to they can put up with it; indeed, they seem to thrive in cold weather.

It is the conditions under which they are transported that are at fault. In nearly every instance they are "packed" in crates, scarcely allowing them to turn round. These are stowed below deck where there is little ventilation. The result is that when they are brought into contact with the cold air they contract pneumonia or dysentery, to which they are very prone—all gorillas carry the dysentery germ about with them, as do most white men who have spent the greater part of their lives in the Congo—and they naturally succumb.

I have had three gorillas altogether. They were all quite young, between the ages of three and six. The first John Daniel lived for three years and then contracted pneumonia. The second developed a pain in his head which afterwards turned out to be an abscess on the brain—he had probably fallen in the jungle when a baby and hurt



[*J. Weston & Son.*

JOHN DANIEL II TAKES MISS CUNNINGHAM'S NIECE FOR A RIDE ON HIS BACK.

his head. The third John Daniel, which I took to America, died of dysentery.

Gorillas grow at roughly the same rate as man. My three babies at four and five stood approximately between four feet eight and nine, but a full-grown animal, of course, will stand well over five feet eight or nine. As far as can be ascertained, they live longer than man, though whether this is due to their vegetarian habits I do not know.

Gorillas are much like children, and if you treat them as such you cannot go far wrong. They are very affectionate and soon come to understand all you say.

When the first John came into my possession it was my ambition to be able to have him upstairs in our house as an ordinary member of the family. With this idea in mind I taught him as a child is taught and handled. This naturally took time. At first I could not make him understand what we expected of him, though I always petted him and gave him grapes (of which he was specially fond), but I think he imagined that this treatment was a punishment. At first, without any reason, he would roll on the floor and shriek, but directly he understood what was expected of him he soon learned, and began to behave splendidly.

This training occupied well over six weeks. Then we took him out of his cage and allowed him the freedom of the house. Thereafter he would run upstairs to the bathroom of his own accord, turning the door-knob of whatever room he was in, and also opening the door of the bathroom.

His table manners left nothing to be desired. He always sat at table with us, and, whenever a meal was ready, would pull his own chair up to his place. He did not care to eat a great deal, but he drank large quantities of water, usually out of a tumbler. This he would always get himself whenever he wanted it by turning on a tap. Strange to say, he always turned off the water when he had finished drinking.

Hitherto, the chimpanzee has been regarded as approaching most nearly to man of all the wild animals; he is undoubtedly a marvellous mimic, but to my mind he lacks the gorilla's initiative.



[*Willott, Berlin.*

JOHN DANIEL II WITH HIS FAVOURITE PLAYMATE.



JOHN DANIEL III ACCEPTS A TIT-BIT FROM HIS MISTRESS SIX WEEKS AFTER BEING CAUGHT IN THE JUNGLE.

For instance, if John ever found a room particularly warm, he would open the window of his own accord, first looking to see if the catch was undone. But one of the most amazing things I ever saw him do was one day when I was resting in a chair prior to going out. John wished to sit in my lap, but as my dress happened to be a new one, I pushed him away and said "No!" He at once lay on the floor and cried like a child for about a minute. Then he rose, looked round the room, found a newspaper, went and picked it up, spread it on my lap and climbed up. This was quite the cleverest thing I ever saw him do. Even those who saw it said they would not have believed had they not seen for themselves!

I never taught any of my gorillas tricks, not merely because I am of the opinion that it is not right to teach animals tricks, but because I was anxious to see how they would develop their own initiative.

The only exception was that I taught them cleanly habits, which they readily learnt. In respect of the cleanliness of their bodies they have nothing to learn, for I found that when first caught they were beautifully clean. Monkeys and other wild animals in their wild state are quite clean; it is only when the poor things are kept in captivity under insanitary conditions that they become infected with vermin and other parasites.

They cannot speak, of course, any more than prehistoric man could, but they have definite guttural sounds for pleasure, pain, contentment, anger, etc.

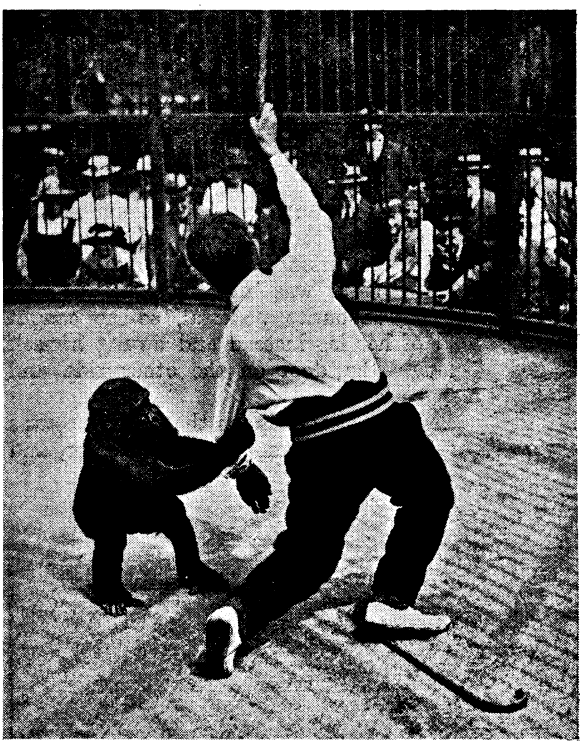
Before the first John Daniel came into my possession through my brother, I knew absolutely nothing about the habits and characteristics of gorillas.

The first John Daniel was brought to Europe by a sea captain, who disposed of him to John Daniel Hamlyn, the wild animal dealer, who gave him his name of John Daniel, and then sold him to Messrs. Derry and Toms, the well-known drapers. While there he contracted pneumonia, and in this condition was purchased by my brother. We built in my garden a specially constructed hut, with walls made of several linings of muslin to keep out the draughts. Here John was carefully nursed, and in a fortnight had completely recovered his health and spirits.



JOHN DANIEL II WITH HIS FAVOURITE PLAYMATE, MISS CUNNINGHAM'S NIECE.

After his sad death, my brother and I decided to make a journey to the Congo and catch the next one ourselves. We estimated, much to the amusement of more experienced friends, that it would take us roughly six months. As a matter of fact, it took us just under that time, and during this period we managed not only to catch a baby gorilla but a young pigmy elephant, standing about 35 inches high, a very rare animal. It was a question of beginner's luck, I suppose, as in the ordinary course one might easily spend months in the jungle without catching sight of a pigmy elephant, let alone catching one.



[*Central News.*

JOHN DANIEL II INDULGES IN A GAME OF "CATCH AS CATCH CAN" WITH HIS KEEPER AT THE LONDON ZOO FOR THE BENEFIT OF AN ADMIRING AUDIENCE.

Gorillas are mostly caught in a restricted area of the French Congo. They live a family life and to all appearance are monogamous. You usually come across them in small family groups comprising a father, mother and, judging by the way the others vary in size, their children, the eldest being as tall as its parent, the next a little smaller, and so on down to the little one suckling at its mother's breast.

The country in which we found ourselves was very wild and uncivilised. The villages —the few there were—were situated miles apart and in open compounds. Such necessaries as milk and butter were unknown.

To reach the jungle where the gorillas are found one has to spend forty-eight hours cramped up in a small dug-out canoe paddled by natives. To compensate one for the mosquitoes which breed in millions in the mangrove swamps, the tropical scenery is very beautiful, though somewhat monotonous. Hour after hour it is the same; dense jungle, which makes landing impossible, running down to the edge of the river.

Natives are usually engaged to capture the gorillas, because the animals do not pick up their scent so quickly as a white man's. It is not possible, of course, to catch a full-grown animal, owing to its terrific strength; even a baby gorilla is as strong as three grown men. Fortunately, when a gorilla family is on the move, the youngest—just like a human baby —usually drags behind. This is the natives' opportunity. They throw a sack over its head and then take to their heels, breathing a prayer that the parents will not follow.

When I took John Daniel II to America he was the source of much attraction, and, I think, enjoyed the homage paid him as much as the public enjoyed watching him.

He used to travel with me in a Pullman car (the Great Western Railway, by the way, was the only line in England which would permit John to travel in an ordinary carriage) like an ordinary passenger, and was usually as good as gold. In passing from the train to the show-grounds he would take hold of my hand and let me lead him along. The only prank of his that caused me any anxiety was his fondness for exploring underneath the train. I was always terrified that it would start and he would get crushed in the wheels. However, he didn't.

The incident that led to my having to put a chain on him might easily have ended tragically. It happened in Texas, where Ringlings were then showing. John always



JOHN DANIEL III WITH HIS KEEPER IN AMERICA.

went for a ride in my car in the afternoons, but on this particular occasion, when we got back he showed a reluctance to return to his cage. Suddenly, without warning, he bolted into the tent where the elephants were tethered.

Now all animals are terrified of the gorilla, particularly elephants, though why this should be so I have never understood unless it is that they fear their appalling strength. When John went to the London Zoo for a while and had a cage allotted him in the lion house, his presence greatly disturbed the lions, although they could not see him.

John, of course, realised at once the sensation he was causing, and this made him even more wild. He rushed round the tent uttering weird and fearful cries, and swinging by his arms along the poles above the elephants' heads. The elephants plunged and pulled frantically at their chains, screaming and trumpeting the while.

Fortunately for all of us, the chains held and John was at last caught and calmed down. As a punishment a collar was fixed round his neck and he was led about on a chain. He suffered a little from the ignominy at first, but like a child soon got over it.

But gorillas, I have found, are not particularly fond of getting into mischief, as are chimpanzees. John, anyway, was usually very good in company and would never deliberately frighten anyone just for the sake of doing so.

He once, quite unconsciously, gave an elderly lady a start. It happened in this way. I had a little shop in Sloane Street and a flat above. To get to the flat you had to pass through the shop. John and I had been for a walk and were just returning. John, being in front, was the first to enter the shop. An elderly lady stood inside with her back to us. Now John usually swung himself into the shop by hanging on to something. On this occasion the lady was in the way of his favourite pedestal, so he caught hold of her leg instead and swung himself through the door on the other side and disappeared.

The look of surprise on the lady's face was painful. She had not seen John enter, and



JOHN DANIEL III POSING FOR HIS PHOTOGRAPH BEFORE GOING A RIDE WITH A FRIEND IN AMERICA.

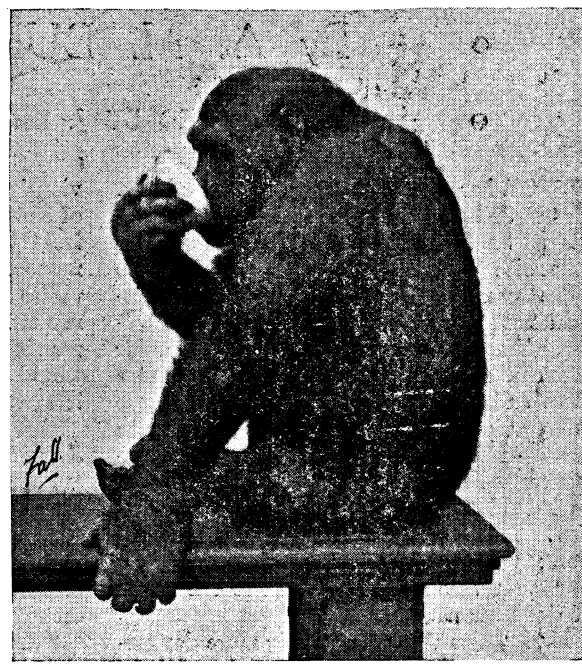
since there was no one in the shop beside herself, she was completely bewildered. I said nothing, of course, and she did not mention it, but I could not help smiling to myself at the worried, puzzled expression on her face and the way she kept glancing down at her leg as she left the shop.

It is an extraordinary fact that gorillas play instinctively the games played by human children, such as hide-and-seek and blind-man's buff. It is most amusing to watch them close their eyes tightly, knowing well the rules of the games, and rush round, falling against furniture in their endeavour to catch the person they are after. When they get more civilised they will, of their own accord, take a piece of cloth, put it over their heads, and play the game in the most approved fashion.

John was especially fond of my little niece, three years old. John and she used to play together for hours, and he seemed to understand what she wanted him to do. If she ever cried, and her mother would not go and pick her up, John would always try to nip the mother, or give her a resounding smack with the full weight of his hand, evidently thinking she was the cause of the child's tears.

The one thing gorillas cannot stand is excitement of any kind or a person making a sudden movement. Sometimes when children have visited my house and got John to play with them, he would get so excited that I was compelled to take him away, or he would have ruined all my furniture.

They love anyone young; they seem to realise that they have less to fear in their presence and will be better understood. To illustrate this, John would never face a cow, and if I happened to take him through a field in which one was grazing, he would jump on to my shoulders and hold on for all he was worth. Yet if there happened to be a young calf, John would immediately run up to it, pull its tail, and try to get it to play, incidentally nearly frightening the poor animal to death in the process.



[*Thomas Fall.*

JOHN DANIEL II REFRESHES HIMSELF WITH A CUP OF MILK.

Curiously enough, he always knew instinctively if anyone was afraid of him. Sometimes when he came into a drawing-room full of people he would deliberately go up to a person showing signs of fear and pull him or her about. Fear breeds fear, and I think it was because he felt uneasy in that person's presence that he would behave so disgracefully.

VICTIMS.

MEN see winged victims madly flit
About a candle flame
And perish tortured, yet acquit
The slayer of all blame;
And I in justice must admit
That though you seared my heart,
You never gave a thought to it:
'Twas Nature, not your art.

CHARLES JEROME.

THAT'S FOR REMEMBRANCE

By A. M. BURRAGE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

FOR her sins and mine I had taken Mrs. Jelland in to dinner. This was probably due to a spice of malice in an otherwise perfect hostess. Mrs. Jelland is a chatterer, but she is not one of the egotistical kind that wants to do all the chattering. The latter sort is easily endured, for one can fall into a comfortable comatose state and merely say Yes or No when the brief periods of silence are left ringing with notes of interrogation. In those circumstances a sort of sixth sense informs one if he should use the affirmative or the negative. That is not an insupportable situation: your partner is happy, and you are courteous without being bored to the limits of endurance.

Mrs. Jelland, however, is far more dangerous. She rations her own periods of talk, as if an invisible Speaker were in control of the situation. Having rattled away like a kind of human typewriter for a certain number of seconds, or even minutes, she pauses. It is now your turn. You are expected to rattle away on the same subject for precisely the same length of time. She has all the instincts of a stop-watch. This means that you must keep on the alert and have your piece ready to say, even though you may know nothing and care less about the Ten Lost Tribes and the British Israelite Movement.

My other neighbour was a very pretty girl of twenty-three or so, with the brightest blue eyes I had ever seen in my life. She had a mother at the other end of the table. I had been introduced to both, but had failed to catch their name. I could see that she, too, was bored and preoccupied. When the soup was served she had allowed the glass at her elbow to be filled with sherry, but she had left it untouched and was obviously setting her ears to catch fragments of conversation from across the table while, from time to time, she nibbled salted almonds. In setting an apparently sympathetic ear towards Mrs. Jelland I half turned my face in her direction. The man on her far side had little or nothing to say, and I would have loved to talk to her. I thought it an unfair sort of world.

But she came to my rescue when Mrs. Jelland reached one of her pauses which seemed to say, "Now go on; it's *your* turn." She pushed the dish of salted almonds towards me with a smile and said:

"Will you please do me a favour and push these out of my reach? Otherwise I shall certainly eat them all."

"With pleasure. I happen to like salted almonds myself."

"It's nice to find out so soon that we've something in common," said the girl, with a hint of mischief in her very blue eyes. "Do you believe in affinities, Mr. Collins?"

"I didn't, but I've just been converted. Do you like eggs soft or hard boiled?"

"I hate eggs," said Miss Blue Eyes.

"It's marvellous!" I murmured, lost in amazement. "Surely it was Fate that brought us together."

"No, it wasn't; it was Mrs. Lymore. She said she always fought with you and there'd be murder done if she had to sit next to you throughout a dinner. So our places at table were changed. It's a pity that people who breed Airedales can never be friends with people who breed Alsatians."

"Don't say *you* prefer Alsatians," I begged.

She nodded and laughed, and I sighed unhappily.

"All my illusions are destroyed," I said

"I was beginning to hope that we saw eye to eye about everything."

"Do you think it's necessary to do that to hit it off?" she asked. "I've always thought that Mr. and Mrs. Jack Sprat must have been an ideal couple."

"A marriage of *convenance*," I said. "And how the butcher must have hated them! I am an incurable romantic. I believe I have an affinity somewhere, but always when I think I have found her she unmasks. She admits that she likes Wagner or plovers' eggs, or both. That is why you behold me, still unmarried, in the August of my days."

I saw her looking for the salted almonds, but they were all out of her reach and I deliberately refrained from passing them.

"I met my affinity once," she remarked.

"Really? And what happened?"

"Oh, I fell in love with him, of course. I was fifteen at the time. It was a very serious affair."

"And I suppose he was fat, middle-aged and married, and used to pat you on the head and ask you how the school net-ball team was getting on?"

"No, he was seventeen. But it all came to nothing, through a family feud. We were torn asunder by the hands of cruel parents! There are still Montagues and Capulets in the world, you know."

"A plague o' both their houses," said I; and then I felt that I really had to turn and say something to Mrs. Jelland, who was now engaged in a general and desultory conversation.

She was talking about her own defective memory, and admitted having lost her engagement book and not being sure, until she had rung up a friend, if her dinner engagement were on this or the following evening. "I think I must subscribe to one of those institutions and go through a course of memory training," she said.

"I shouldn't!" said a fair-haired, frivolous young man sitting opposite. "It's much pleasanter to forget things than to remember them. People with consciences must find it perfectly hateful to remember all the details of their past lives. If some firm were to advertise its ability to teach people the art of forgetfulness there'd be a rush to take shares. Lethe, Limited. The lucky people are the people who've lost their memories."

He was not a fortunate young man. The brick which he had dropped fell with a loud crash right into the middle of the table, and most people around him busied themselves in pretending that they hadn't heard it. But for my part I didn't mind in the least.

"You're wrong there," I said quietly. "You don't know my cousin, Francis Merton?"

"What, has he——? I'm awfully sorry. Of course, I didn't know."

"Didn't he hurt himself playing football?" Mrs. Jelland asked in a low voice.

"Yes. Head injured, including concussion. There's nothing the matter with his brain, but his memory's entirely gone, right up to the time of the accident. He has to lead a pretty retired life. Unless one has thought it out very carefully, one can't realise what a dreadful handicap loss of memory must be. When one comes to think of it, nine-tenths of one's thoughts are really memories."

A hand touched my arm. It belonged to the girl with the very blue eyes. They were shining now, and almost moist.

"I didn't know—he had had an accident," she said jerkily. "I used to know him. Do you mind telling me about him? Or oughtn't I to ask?"

"It happened several years ago," I told her. "I don't know if he'll get his memory back. Doctors disagree about that. But it's spoilt his life, poor fellow. You see, he's sensitive about it, and he hates meeting people who know him and whom he hasn't the vaguest recollection of having met before. And, of course, he's terribly handicapped in conversation. He can't discuss anything that didn't happen in the last four years. So he leads a hermit's life, pottering about in the country. Fortunately for him, he has enough to live on comfortably without having to work."

I saw that her head had dropped.

"Poor thing!" she said softly. "Can't he remember anything at all? Is it like looking back at a blank wall?"

"Not quite like that, as far as I can understand. He speculates about his past, I think—weaves in romantic little stories which never happened, just as most of us look into the future and weave romantic little stories which never will happen. His memory in one respect isn't entirely gone. He retains his education. Things which have been instilled into his mind he keeps. But memories of people, places and incidents are all gone. When did you know him?"

"Oh, some time ago," she answered hastily. "I'm so awfully sorry. I suppose—even if he did remember something he

wouldn't know that he hadn't just imagined it ? "

" I suppose so. I think he does get gleams. We had great hopes of him three years ago. For some reason or other he demanded to be taken to Penhilloc in Cornwall."

" Penhilloc ! " she repeated with a catch in her breath.

" Yes. Well, what seemed so promising was that he'd been there as a boy, although nobody had told him so, and he couldn't possibly have known he'd been there without a flash of memory. So I motored him down. We all hoped that the sight of the place might set the stopped machinery in motion once more. But it didn't. As a matter of fact, he *didn't* remember having been there, and didn't know the place when he saw it. But his wanting to go there was strange, for it's a little remote seaside town."

I thought I saw a tremor pass through her frame.

" Three years ago," she said in a very low voice. " Was it in August ? "

" Yes," said I, mildly surprised.

There was a pause, during which she fidgeted with her table-napkin.

" What a disappointment for you ! " she said shakily at last. " Didn't anything happen there at all ? "

" Nothing ! Oh yes. One queer thing he did. There's an old ruin of a castle on a headland above the town. He went out one evening and spent the whole night wandering around it. I couldn't drag him away, and he couldn't, or wouldn't, explain what he wanted there. He said he didn't know."

I heard her draw a long breath and saw her look up into the shadows above the shaded lights.

" Was that the night of the twenty-third of August ? " she asked presently.

" I don't know. I don't remember the date. But why ? You weren't down there at the time, were you ? "

" No, oh no. I don't know what made me think of that particular date. Please—please believe how very sorry I am about him."

That seemed to close the subject. And besides, I had neglected Mrs. Jelland all too long. After that the girl with the very blue eyes had little to say to me, but when the ladies rose she hovered and bent over me.

" I can't talk to you here," she said hastily in a low voice. " Can you come and call ? It's about Francis Merton. Perhaps I may be able to help. I shall be in after three to-morrow. Please do come."

" I will with pleasure," I said, hiding my astonishment. " Will you give me the address ? "

" Fifteen, Millicent Road, Lancaster Gate," she said hastily in my ear ; and turned to hurry to the door.

I saw her afterwards in the drawing-room, but not for many minutes. She and her mother were going on to some other house.

I was left wondering for the next many hours why she had been so mysterious and how she thought that she could help poor Francis.

Tactful inquiries of our hostess provided me with her name, which I had not hitherto properly heard. It was Daphne Hillier. I should have been glad in any case of an excuse to call, for she was certainly pretty and she had begun by amusing me. But another and more urgent reason presented me at her address at half-past three on the following afternoon.

Daphne had her own sitting-room on the drawing-room floor. Evidently she had left instructions concerning me, for I was ushered straight thither. It was a mannish sort of room, more library and smoke-room than boudoir. I noticed that there were ash-trays everywhere and the books on the shelves were mostly volumes of modern verses and essays. If a room betrays the character of its owner, then here I had to deal with an up-to-date, cultured and emancipated young person. But last night she had seemed soft and feminine and sweet enough. The room hinted plainly at a striving against her own nature. Nature had intended her to be wooed and loved and kissed, and she was trying so hard, poor dear, to be that shorn sexless monstrosity which calls itself Bachelor Girl.

I had not been in the room a minute before my *garçonne* joined me. She was wearing an afternoon gown which exactly matched her eyes, and she greeted me with a smile and a firm boyish handshake.

" Do sit," she said, " and please smoke. Those are Egyptians in that box, but I've got some gaspers in the drawer here if you prefer them." She sat down in a very low arm-chair and clasped her thin knees. " I wonder if you'll think I've brought you here on a wild-goose chase. When I woke up this morning it all seemed so utterly absurd and far-fetched. Yet I think I



"She lit the cigarette and her blue eyes hardened as they looked up into mine."

ought to say what I am going to say, although I don't know how to begin to tell you."

"If it concerns Francis——" I began.

"It does. To what extent you must judge for yourself. It seems to me that there's a chance that I might help him. I told you that I knew him, but I didn't tell you how long ago. It was in the summer towards the end of the War. We were both children."

She paused and looked away from me.

"I told you at dinner last night that I'd met my affinity. I was joking, of course, because I don't believe in such things, and, even if they existed, children would be the last to find it out. But I had somebody in mind, and that somebody was Francis Merton. I told you that I fell in love with him, and I meant that quite literally and seriously. I think a childish love is about the only genuine kind. It is perfectly unselfish; it has a magnificent contempt for all the exigencies of life. Its master or mistress hasn't learned to tear the poor thing to shreds, and analyse emotions and call them by nasty names. Love is a game fit only for children, who are able to give and receive perfect trust, and who believe themselves to be the prince and princess of those fairy-tales which all end alike. I've experimented since, you see; I've given and taken scratches; and I know what I'm saying.

"I was just fifteen, and they'd taken me on a holiday to Cornwall, to get away from the air-raids. We stayed at the Castle Hotel, Penhiddoc. Cornwall was full of schoolboys and schoolgirls in those days, because it was safe; and it had attracted a lot of other people, too, who wanted to get away from the danger zone. At the hotel we met a Colonel and Mrs. Merton, and their son Francis, a tall, fair-haired schoolboy of seventeen who went about all day long in a Marlborough blazer. I suppose Colonel Merton is your uncle?"

"Yes."

"Well, my father—he's dead now—and Colonel Merton knew each other slightly, and we were very soon friends with the Mertons. My mother and Mrs. Merton hit it off beautifully together. It was one of those friendships which blaze up too quickly to last. Colonel Merton, you'll remember, had been wounded early in the War, and then had a job in the War Office. He was one of those fire-eaters who really wanted to get back to the Front. He almost foamed at the mouth whenever he mentioned the enemy. My father was a philosopher, and therefore moderate and tolerant, a man of very wide and varied learning, who never spoke or thought intemperately. I don't mean that he wasn't a good patriot, but he was the last man in the world to be carried away by popular catch-phrases or to believe implicitly every word he read in the papers.

"At Penhiddoc our respective families split up into pairs. The two men had at least one thing in common; they were fond of fishing for bass and pollock. Our mothers liked to sit sunning themselves on the cliff-head, busy all the time sewing and knitting for the soldiers' hospitals. And that left Francis and me to play tennis, or ramble along the coast, or explore caves which we fondly hoped had been used by smugglers.

"I suppose we were an unusual pair of children. At those ages we ought to have been despising each other's youth. I ought to have been flabbily in love, at a distance, with some matinée idol. He ought to have been the sheepish idolater of some not-too-young matron. But it simply wasn't so. There are exceptions to all these roughest laws of nature. We just fell in love with each other.

"I like men to talk to, to joke with, to fence with, but I know them now too well ever to want to marry. I've chased that ridiculous illusion love to his last hiding-place and exposed the humbug. I admit I've been half in love a dozen times and wholly in love once—and that once was with Francis. To me he was the embodiment of all my heroes of story and legend. I don't know why. I should say, looking back dispassionately, that he was just an ordinary nice boy. But children though we were, we lived in that atmosphere of hasty love—while the War was on—when Love and Death were treading on each other's heels, and although we hadn't realised what was happening to the Olympians who were three or four years older than ourselves, the infection was in the air and we seemed to catch it.

"I suppose we were as absurd as any other two children trying to play at being grown up. We told each other fifty times a day how much we loved each other, but we only kissed twice. We were tremendously shy and afraid of this miracle which brought the colour to our cheeks when our eyes met or our hands touched. Don't think we were too precocious. We hid nine-tenths of our sentiment. We meant to marry, but marriage was something almost as remote as death, and not yet to be thought of.

"Those were wonderful days. I suppose I was as nearly completely happy as it is possible to be in an imperfect world. Even the shadow of the War hardly touched us. If it lasted another year Francis would be old enough to join the Army, and I hardly knew if I wanted him safe at home or if I

wanted him to show the world what a hero he was. And then suddenly, without any warning, our fools' paradise came to an end.

"I don't know the details; I only know that our respective fathers quarrelled. I believe Colonel Merton called my father a Pacifist, which was about the most opprobrious word which anybody in those days could use. I can imagine how my father, with his fine brain and keen ironic tongue, replied to him. Probably he stung Colonel Merton into using some cruder abuse. Each man was sure that the other had insulted him; so both families decided to leave Penhiddoc, although, at the most, there was only need for one to have gone.

"I was allowed to say good-bye to Francis. That was the second time we kissed. I rested in his arms and cried. We weren't even going to be allowed to write to each other. All our hopes rested in the very far future when we should both be of age and able to do as we chose. So guess what compact we made. No, guess why I suggested that the night when Francis behaved so strangely was the twenty-third of August."

I shook my head.

"How can I?" I said.

"Because the twenty-third of August, three years ago, was my twenty-first birthday. You see, we decided that when that day came I should be allowed to do exactly as I liked, and we both swore solemnly that we'd meet by the old ruin on the headland on the night of my twenty-first birthday."

Her eyes suddenly dimmed.

"And he was there, poor darling! Lost memory and all, he was there!"

"And you weren't," I said quietly.

She laughed at that.

"Would anybody have expected me to do anything so idiotic? I was fifteen when I made that promise. Even if I'd wanted to see him again, think of the chances against his keeping the appointment. And I didn't particularly want to see him again. I had a pash for somebody else at the time. Nobody with the least grain of sense would have expected either of us to be there."

"The point is," said I, "that if you had been, would he have remembered you? It's quite clear to me that, deep in his subconsciousness, he knew that he had an appointment at that place and time. If he had seen you, would he have recognised you, and would that have set the machinery of his memory working again?"

"That's why I wanted to talk to you. I'm willing to try, if you like. Bring him to that spot one night and I'll meet him there."

I stood up.

"It's worth trying," I said, "and I don't know how to thank you."

"I don't need thanks, I assure you."

"But wait a moment," I said. "Suppose he does know you?"

"Then we can cheer, can't we?"

"Yes, but—suppose he renews his youthful infatuation? I've heard you say one or two cynical things about men and love."

She smiled almost derisively.

"I ask you—is it likely?" she said. "If people were all faithful to their first loves there'd be some very funny marriages."

"Since you ask me, it's very likely indeed. You must have made a strong impression on him or he wouldn't have acted as he did. Suppose he falls in love with you, what are you going to do about it?"

She reached for a cigarette and fumbled irritably with the lid of the box.

"Need we meet trouble half-way?" she asked. "If I give him back his memory, won't that satisfy him?"

"I've never lost my memory," I returned, "nor suffered from unrequited love, so I don't know which is the worse."

She lit the cigarette and her blue eyes hardened as they looked up into mine.

"Shall he risk it?" she asked. "It's for you to say."

"It ought to be his choice, but I must choose for him. He shall risk it. When can you come?"

She considered.

"End of next week? There are one or two conventions still hanging on worn threads, and I suppose I shall have to dig out an elderly female cousin to accompany me. That won't be difficult. What are elderly female cousins for? We'd better start planning the campaign. He mustn't see me until we actually meet outside the ruin. Will you be going down by road or rail?"

I sat down again, and we began to lay our plans.

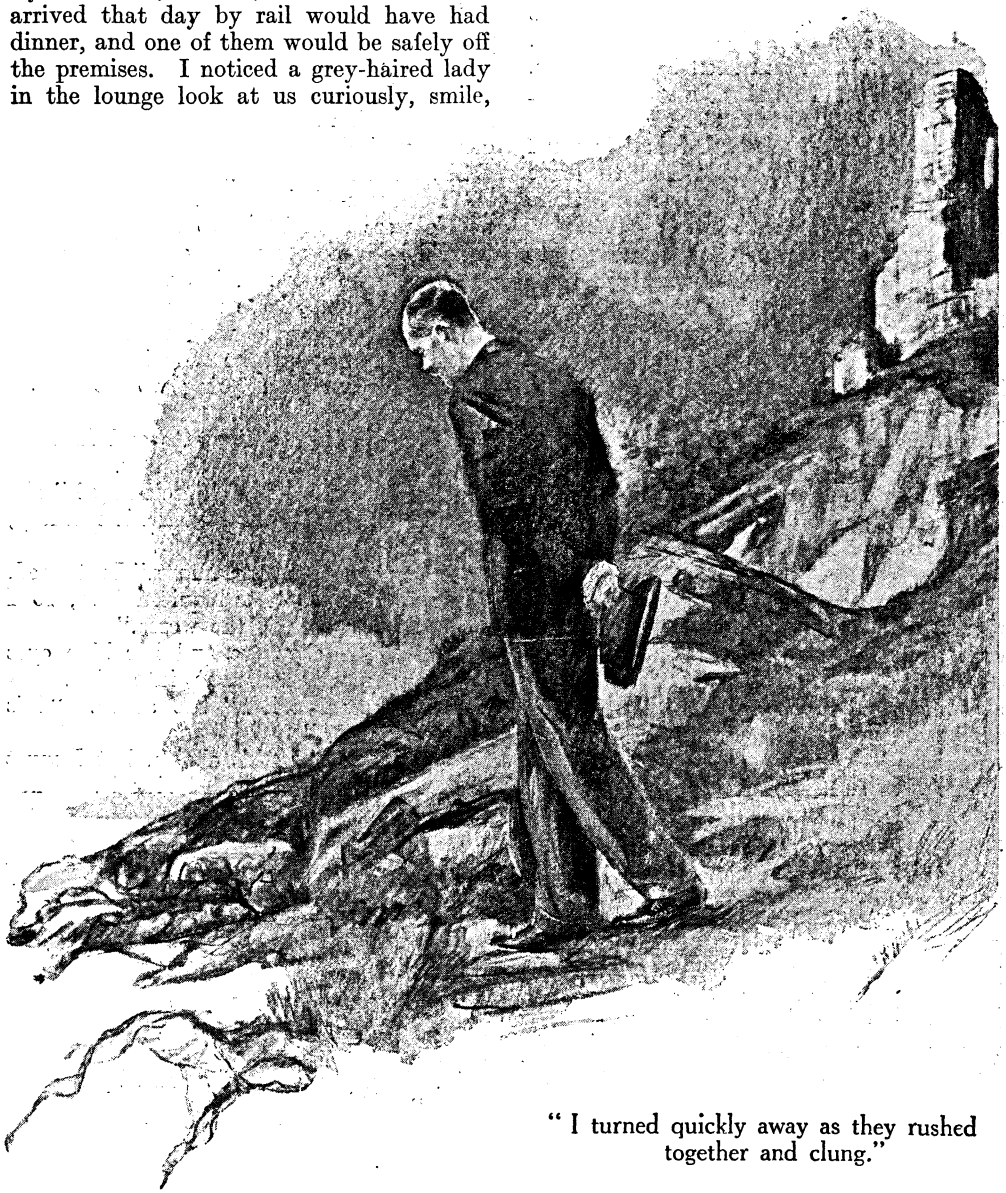
I had no difficulty at all in persuading Francis to accompany me to Penhiddoc for a few days' "loafing," as I described the proposed excursion. He hated going about by himself, but he was always grateful for the company of anybody who knew him well. Besides, on his visit to Penhiddoc three

years ago, he had said that the place had a strong attraction for him.

So at the end of the following week I spent a long, tiring day driving him down in my two-seater, and correctly timed our arrival at the Castle Hotel at nine o'clock. By that time, I knew, two ladies who had arrived that day by rail would have had dinner, and one of them would be safely off the premises. I noticed a grey-haired lady in the lounge look at us curiously, smile, and make a tentative bow to me. This I guessed to be the elderly female cousin, and I knew that they had both arrived and that so far all was well.

Then began the real difficulty. It was a tremendous task to get Francis to walk with me as far as the ruined castle. He said that he was tired and wanted to go to bed and that he had no use just then for the mouldy old ruin. I nearly had to drag him there by sheer force.

It must have been half-past ten before we reached the top of the headland. The moon had come up behind the remains of the castle, and the old pile was a black silhouette against the luminous sky. Everything was still, and at first I thought that we had the headland to ourselves.



"I turned quickly away as they rushed together and clung."



But as we drew near, a girl's figure rose from a boulder, and, trying to control my voice, I said: "Hullo! Somebody's here."

A few moments later I heard the strangest cry I have ever heard from a man's lips. It came from Francis's lips, and it ended in the one word, "Daphne!"

I turned quickly away as they rushed together and clung.

I walked about for more than an hour before returning to the hotel. It seemed like a cure, but I wasn't too happy about it. Daphne had shown me pretty plainly that she wasn't the marrying sort. Having

heard that cry, I knew well enough that Francis was going to resume being in love with the divinity of his early boyhood. He was a man who felt deeply, and he might easily prefer oblivion to hopeless love. Thank Heaven, I'm one of the easy-going sort.

When I got to the hotel I found them alone together in the lounge. Francis was saying something which began with, "Do you remember?" Neither of them seemed to notice me, so I slipped out.

But an hour later I waylaid Daphne on her way to bed. Her eyes were wet and shining, but she smiled when she saw me.

"Oh, thank Heaven!" she said softly, and hid her little wet face against my sleeve.

"Yes," I said, "it's a cure all right, but it's a question whether the patient won't suffer a worse infliction, an exchange of evils. What are you going to do about it now?"

She looked up at me and smiled again, and the light in her eyes took away a load from my mind.

"Oh," she said, making an effort to speak lightly, "I suppose I had better make a proper job of it now, hadn't I?"

THE SKI-ER.

SLIM silhouette, against a sun-kissed sky,
With scarlet scarf a-swing and cheeks a-glow
Lightly she posed—a bird prepared to fly.
Swift, stentic ski-ing over powdered snow.

Steep fell the slope beneath her feet, so white—
Save where recumbent corpses twisted lay;
Calm she surveyed them from her lofty height
Dancing her eyes—curls in the breeze a-sway.

Achtung! **cried one as down the slope he shot,**
Fore! **yelled another as they met and crashed—**
Legs, arms and sticks entangled in a knot,
Hopes of a non-stop flight completely dashed.

She's off!—I watched below enthralled, no need
For her to shout—swift, silent, sure, she sped,
A thing of grace, and only slackened speed
To stem round those who blocked her path ahead.

Sticks trailed behind, knees bent and body low,
(Ah me, I sighed; I have a lot to learn)
With graceful ease, (red scarf against white snow)
She finished with a Christiana turn.

W. D. HOLDSWORTH HUNT.

THE WHITE HAWTHORN

By ANDREW SOUTAR

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

I.

IT was when the wind came from the south-west, striking obliquely across the lawn at the back of the "White Hawthorns," that you heard the eerie voice most distinctly :

"Don't do it! Don't do it!"

Even in the light of day a sensitive ear could pick up the call of a restless spirit : in the dead of night it was unmistakable :

"Don't do it! Don't do it!"

A whine, a moan, a pitiful pleading for mercy.

For three years after the disappearance of John Marriott the house had remained empty save for a few weeks. The trustees had tried to let the place, since they couldn't presume his death and sell ; they had four tenants in two months, and all left because of that damnable wail from the garden. It frayed the nerves to the verge of hysteria.

Then Raymond Dean came home from the West Coast of Africa, bringing with him his young wife, Joan, a niece of John Marriott and one of the most charming little women it has been my fortune to meet. When I learned that they had taken up their residence in "White Hawthorns," I rather admired the courage of the young man, and for this reason. He was the first to be questioned closely by the authorities when inquiries were being made into the disappearance of Marriott—rich, eccentric, irascible Marriott, who had strongly resented the marriage. It was known that the old man went out to West Africa and that he and Dean had quarrelled violently. That was the end of the search so far as the authorities were concerned ; they confessed, tacitly, that they were baffled.

It was a few weeks before Christmas when I was invited to stay the week-end with them. I had known Joan since she was ten years of age ; I had romped in the garden with her and bribed the old housekeeper to let her stay up just another half-hour after her uncle had ordered her to bed. But I fear that I accepted this invitation more out of curiosity than regard for the spirit of those early days. These young people must have been told why others had refused to stay in the place. Dean's gesture was in the nature of a challenge to those who had connected him with the disappearance of his wife's uncle. I was agreeably impressed when I met him, although I didn't care for the light of cynicism that came into his eyes when he referred to the innuendoes which he had been compelled to brave.

Just before dusk they took me around the grounds, which were three acres in extent. The name of the house was derived from a number of white hawthorns in the garden : they formed the hedges ; there was one in the middle of the rose garden and another in the centre of the lawn at the back of the house. Old Marriott used to say that these hawthorns were brought from France by the Huguenots. This one on the lawn was the finest specimen of a white hawthorn I had ever seen.

Although it was late in the year, the grounds were in excellent order.

"Give old Mickleham credit for that," said Joan. "He was uncle's gardener for twenty years, and even after the disappearance and when he was dismissed by the trustees he insisted on coming back of an evening when his day's work was done so that he might tend his beloved flowers and shrubs."

Of course, they had heard the stories of the restless spirit. Raymond laughed cynically : Joan was not disposed to discuss the matter. As we reached the door after our round of the garden she caught instinctively

at my sleeve. A high wind was blowing across the lawn. She didn't ask me to listen, but her action was eloquent. That which I heard didn't disturb me: that which I *felt* depressed me indescribably.

We sat in the smoking-room after dinner—Raymond and I. There was that in his expression which hinted at desire to make a confidant of me.

"You knew John Marriott better than I did," he said. And the remark came as an abrupt diversion from the topic we had been discussing.

"We were at college together," said I.

"Fiendish temper?"

"He would always apologise a moment after hurting you with a word."

"I could never understand him," he said. "One day he would write you from Lisbon; the next time you heard from him he might be in Brazil." He laughed reminiscently. "I defied him to the last," he said, and clasped his hands round the back of his head as he sat in his chair. "I told him that I should marry Joan even if I had to carry her off in the old-fashioned way; and I told him that I didn't expect him to leave her a penny of his money."

He stopped abruptly and glanced at the French windows that led to the lawn at the back of the house. "It was my wish, not hers, that we should come back here and rent the place from the trustees. I'm rather sorry I did it. Perhaps it was mere bravado on my part. She pretends that she isn't scared. Do you think she is?"

"What is there to be scared about?" I asked.

"Nothing," said he, "but you know what women are."

He turned to adjust the oil standard lamp (old Marriott would have no other illuminant in the house). By mischance he turned down the wick too far: the light was extinguished and we were in total darkness.

At that instant the wind took to itself a greater fury, and though my nerves are supposed to be sound, I uttered an exclamation of alarm as the French windows flew open. They had been fastened insecurely—that was all—but the incident was disturbing.

"Shut them," said Raymond commandingly, fumbling with the lamp. Before I could reach the doors Joan came into the room and her voice was full of terror as she cried:

"Listen! Listen!"

From out of the darkness came the human wail:

"Don't do it! Don't do it!"

Raymond struck a match, but a gust of wind blew it out. He called stridently to me: "Shut the doors—can't you?" Then, "Sorry, old man. Don't upset Joan."

I closed the doors. He managed to light the lamp. His face was very pale.

"All right, darling," he said to her. "You must make a big effort to control your nerves."

She tried to smile at me as I looked across the room in her direction: it was a pitiable travesty of a smile. Raymond placed a chair in position for her, and, stooping, kissed her on the cheek.

"Look here," he said, "we'll clear out if you really feel you can't stand it any longer." He looked at me in an inquiring manner, as though he were seeking to determine my thoughts. I noticed that she was holding tightly to his left hand.

I remarked that she had allowed foolish stories to affect her unduly.

Raymond agreed, but he wasn't thinking of the stories told by terrified tenants. Almost fiercely he said:

"Do you think that I would have come here—to this house—if I were guilty of injuring John Marriott?"

Joan gained strength from his attitude.

"Raymond was more tolerant than I believed it possible for a man to be. Uncle's temper was unbearable. He must have driven old Mickleham to the verge of insanity with his complaints and commands."

"I was going to speak to you about Mickleham," said I. "What was his attitude towards you when you returned?"

"He was always very kind to me," said Joan, "for he knew that he could rely on my sympathy when uncle was more irritable and exacting than usual."

And Raymond assured me that Mickleham accepted him without the slightest sign of antipathy.

"I should have liked to keep him on," he said, "but we took the place only for a few months just to prove to the scandalmongers that . . . well, you understand?"

"Quite," said I, adding: "Mickleham would find it easy to get a new place?"

"Anywhere," said Joan with enthusiasm. "But he refuses to take one, he is so attached to these grounds. He planted most of the shrubs and flowers: he adored the hawthorns, especially that one on the lawn."

"The tree of contention," said Raymond musingly. "Joan will tell you that her

uncle and Mickleham quarrelled more about that hawthorn than over all the rest of the garden."

"I could never understand why the poor old fellow remained so long," said Joan. "For never a day passed without a scene. Uncle was insisting from morning till night that this tree should be cut down, that one shifted, this border altered, and so forth. What he didn't understand was that to a gardener like Mickleham every plant and tree had life and soul. I remember coming on the poor old fellow in tears. In a fit of temper uncle had smashed a rose tree with his walking-stick. I tried to console him, but all he could say was that he could feel the pain this particular rose tree must have suffered in its last moments."

They told me that soon after their arrival at the "White Hawthorns," Mickleham came around and begged to be allowed to tend this tree and that one: he couldn't bear the thought that another gardener might be taken on in his stead.



"Before I could reach the doors Joan came into the room and her voice was full of terror as she cried:

"'Listen! Listen!'"

We retired early that night. They had given me a room that overlooked the lawn at the back of the house. As I bade them good-night I fancied that there was a look of fear in Joan's eyes, but Raymond, with a gesture, warned me against comment. I gathered that she was still suffering from the shock she had received earlier in the evening.

"Try to sleep in spite of the elements," said I, infusing cheerfulness into my voice. The wind was crashing across the gardens, the elms in the near distance were screaming and groaning like beasts in pain. "Your imagination is too lively."

They were standing at my bedroom door at the time and I noticed that she peered furtively past me and trembled:

"You don't mind sleeping there—do you?" she asked. "It was uncle's room."

"Bless your dear heart—no," I replied. "Good night."

They passed along to their own apartment.

II.

I CLOSED my door and set the lighted candle on the dressing-table. I knew the house to be very old, so that the creaking of timbers didn't disturb my peace of mind. Frankly, I couldn't get young Raymond out of my thoughts. Outside, the wind was blowing with greater velocity than ever: a tendril of virginia creeper began to beat against the window-pane in an aggravating manner. It was as though someone wished to arouse a sleeper. I opened the window as quietly as possible: the wind doused my candle. From out of the blackness of the garden came again that weird plaintive call. And down there—there, near the hawthorn tree—was the figure of a man! He was standing with one hand resting against the trunk; his head was lowered as in grief. Dark though it was, I recognised old Mickleham, whom I hadn't seen for several years. He didn't appear to see me, and after a while he ambled away—an old, broken man with arched shoulders.

Next morning I mentioned the incident at breakfast and was surprised that they took it so coolly.

"He's always hanging about the place," said Joan. "He loves every foot of the ground."

"He looked as though he were crying as he leaned against the hawthorn," I said.

"Talk to him to-day when he comes around," she replied. "He believes the master to be dead, he says, and he can't forgive himself for the last quarrel he provoked. Uncle wished him to cut down the hawthorn: Mickleham wouldn't hear of it."

An hour later, and while I was wandering around the grounds, I came upon the old man in the rose garden. He had aged sadly since last I saw him; the shoulders were more bent, the hair was almost white; the lines on his face were deep and troubled.

"Good morning, Mickleham," said I. "Still here?"

He straightened his back and ran his thumb over the pruning-knife as he half closed his eyes and peered at me.

"Still here, Mas' Brenton," he said, and smiled as he recognised me. "Can't leave it, y'know."

"And you still believe in autumn pruning, I see."

"Some do leave it till March, Mas' Brenton, but I has my own ideas." He stooped again to his task and with a delicacy of movement that was woman-like cut away the unwanted growth from a rose tree.

I watched him in silence. There was something pathetic about the crumpled figure. For twenty years and longer he had laboured in those grounds: I could quite understand that he loved everything in it, but——

"I should never make a gardener, Mickleham," said I. "The loneliness would drive me crazy."

"Lonely?" he echoed. "'Tain't lonely in a garden if you do love it. Hark, Mas' Brenton! Can't ye hear this rose sayin', 'Thankee, Maister Mickleham, for what you be doin' to me'? Her knows that if I was to leave all this heavy wood on her when the snow or the big rains come they'd weigh her down and mebbe break her so's she couldn't recover. And if I was to leave th' prunin' till March like as not we'd have frost after frost, and th' more I cut away th' more I'd have to cut, if ye get my meaning, Mas' Brenton."

"You always had fine roses at 'White Hawthorns,' Mickleham," said I. "So you must be right."

"Fine everythin'," said he, "on'y the maister couldn't unnerstand—just wouldn't unnerstand." He shook his head slowly and sighed. "Couldn't abear to see me prunin' roses, he couldn't. Said 'twor waste of growth! Did ye ever hear th' like?" He flung back his head because of a recollection. In that instant I visualised the scenes that used to take place between him and my friend Marriott. "'Who was th' first to prune roses, Mas' Marriott?' says I. 'I dunno,' says he, 'but it might ha' been some dam' fool relative o' yourn.' 'Mas' Marriott, I says. It wor a donkey in th' time of Elizabeth. Ye didn't think I had larnin' but I knows what I be talkin' about. 'Twor a donkey that chewed up the roses in a garden, and 'twor found they did better'n th' others next year.' We had a rare set-to

that mornin', Mas' Brenton, but dang it" (his eyes filled with tears), "I wishes now I'd never said an angry word to 'un."

"You loved him, Mickleham, in spite of his little outbursts," said I.

"Ay," said the old man, staring at some vision, "but I loved my 'childern' more. There ain't a plant in this garden that don't belong to me, Mas' Brenton. I allus reared 'em from seed and brought 'em along same as they ought to be brought. An' th' things I done in this rose garden! There ain't nobody knows more'n me about graftin', Mas' Brenton. Did ye ever see a Victoria plum grafted on a damson? Come along o' me an' I'll show ye one in th' kitchen garden. He wouldn't believe it could be done till I showed him. An' yet, Mas' Brenton, every time I slips my knife into a tree jes' to show people what can be done in th' way o' graftin,' I gets a pain under me heart: I don't like hurtin' 'em."

I followed him into the kitchen garden, listened patiently while he explained the feat that had been performed, and followed him back to the lawn on which the white hawthorn was growing and where I had seen him the previous evening. As he approached the tree I observed the twitching of his lips and the glistening of his eyes. He rested his hand on the trunk, smoothed the bark in a caressing manner and turned to me.

"'Tain't blossomed since he died," he said, and there was awe in his voice, "but 'twill bloom again."

"I remember the old white hawthorn," I said. "I've heard them say it was brought from France by one of the Huguenots."

"Like as not," said the old man. "Twenty year and more I've loved it. There be somethin' differ'nt about that hawthorn. When Miss Joan was a baby she'd sit under here, an' if ye was to look up from your job in th' garden, ye'd see these branches reaching down like arms to protect her." He brightened with enthusiasm. "Lookee, Mas' Brenton," he said quickly, "go to yon steps and look back at this hawthorn. Then tell me what it looks like."

To humour the old fellow I walked to the steps leading into the house and looked back as he bade me. Curiously enough, I took an impression that was ludicrous.

"Well?" said he with avidity. And his eyes were glowing.

"It's like an old man," said I. "The head is bowed and he seems to be reaching for somethin'."

"*Or liftin' somethin' up*—eh?"

He so far forgot himself in his emotion as to clutch at my arm. "Liftin' somethin' up—eh?"

"Yes," I conceded. "Lifting something up."

"A'most human—that tree?" He licked his dry lips with the tip of his tongue. "Have you heard anythin', Mas' Brenton?" He had lowered his voice to a whisper and he glanced in the direction of the house as he spoke.

"What do you mean, Mickleham?" said I.

"Nobody ever told you of anythin'—any sound that comes through this tree when the wind be high?"

"I believe that foolish people have said something about hearing voices, but that's all rubbish."

He rubbed his lips with the back of his hand. Then—

"Has Mas' Dean said anythin'?"

"I shouldn't say that Mr. Dean was foolish," I replied.

He nodded as though he had expected that reply.

"Ain't stayin' long, be he?"

"I don't think he is," I said.

Again he glanced at the house.

"You tell him to go away as soon as he can," he said. "An' take th' li'le lady with him. Right away. I'll look after th' house an' grounds while he be gone. I reckon nobody else'll want to live here."

"Look here, Mickleham," I said, "what's in your mind?"

"Nothin' I cares to talk about, Mas' Brenton," he replied, and closed his lips with the snap of a rat-trap.

"Do you believe that Mr. Marriott is dead?" I asked.

"Do you, Mas' Brenton?"

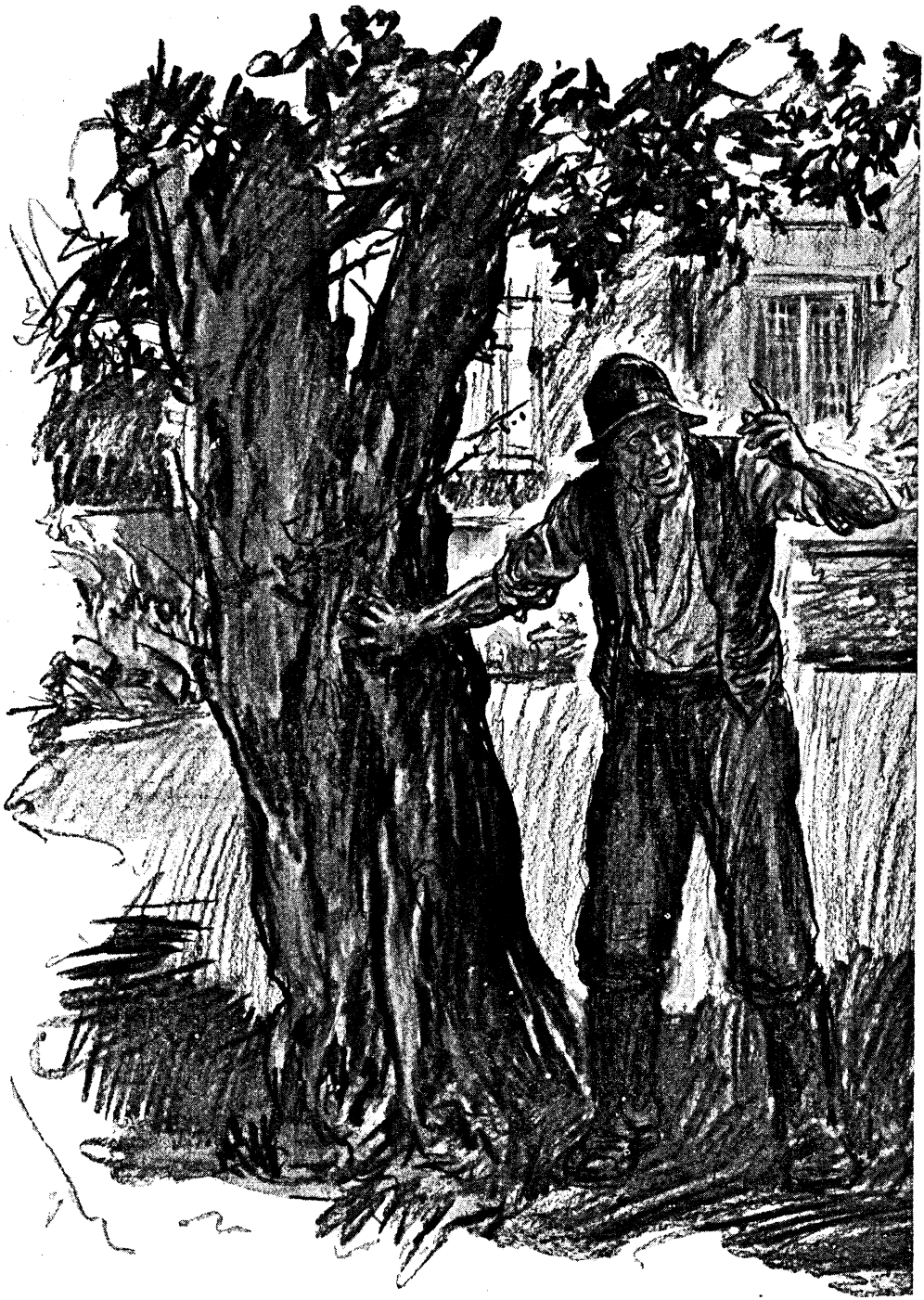
"I don't know," said I. "He was a very eccentric man and in the habit of going abroad without telling a soul where he was going."

"That's right. An' he'd come back and dam' me for a fool and tear up my flowers that I loved—but they was his flowers, come to think of it. An' he'd say: 'I wants this cut and this shifted and you don't know your job, Mickleham, and if I wasn't a fool I'd have ye out of it.' And—and oh, Mas' Brenton, he wanted to cut down this white hawthorn. 'Down with it,' he says, 'or it'll drive me crazy, so 'twill.'"

"Why didn't you do it?" I asked.

"Would ye kill a child of yourn, Mas' Brenton?" he replied.

I compromised. "But you didn't plant



"He rested his hand on the trunk and turned to me: 'Tain't blossomed since he died,' he said, . . . 'but 'twill bloom again.'"


COLLIER

it," I said. "It must be fifty years old."

"Quite that," said Mickleham. "But I did somethin' with that tree no other gardener could have done. I moved the roots, so I did. And lifted 'em out of the clay. You try to do that with an old tree an' see what happens. I got to love her when she recovered jes' as you might get to love somethin' you'd saved from death." He nodded to his thoughts. "But I should have let him have his way. So I should." Again he drifted. "Don't you never let flowers nor trees get hold of your heart, Mas' Brenton," he said. "When anythin' happens to 'em it hurts more'n if you'd lost a child. . . . Ain't blossomed for two years. That's strange. Best white hawthorn I ever saw. . . . Do you believe th' maister be dead?"

I rested a hand on his shoulder.

"Mickleham," I said, "if he should be alive and if he should return, the first person he will welcome will be his old gardener. And he'll apologise for all the irritation he gave you. That was always his great sweetness—always ready to apologise."

And Mickleham, glancing again at the house, said:

"Get 'em away."

He ambled back to the rose garden. I went indoors and found that Raymond was dressed for a walk in the country—heavy boots, breeches and gaiters, and an ash stick in his hand. I went with him. I had made up my mind to question him closely when I got him away from Joan. We strode across the fields.

"What do you think of old Mickleham?" I asked.

"He doesn't interest me profoundly," he replied. "Why do you ask?"

"Do you trust me?" I asked bluntly.

"Certainly," he said. "Joan thinks you are no end of a good fellow."

"I've known her since she was a baby," I told him. "I knew John Marriott, her uncle, for thirty years and more."

"Well?" He looked at me suspiciously.

"Mickleham suspects you of something," I said. "That's all."

"Let him suspect," he retorted. "He's a silly old fool when you come to consider him?"

"I had a long talk with him this morning."

"He bored you to tears with his eternal chatter about pruning and flowers talking and all that sort of rot?"

"No," I said. "He certainly talked about his love of the garden, but he was very anxious that you and Joan should go away from here."

"Why?" He stopped in the path and faced me.

"I don't know," I replied. "And I want you to believe that I'm so fond of Joan that I'd do anything to save you from—from scandal, if you like."

"That's a lie," he said boldly. "You suspect me."

"I do not," I said, but I knew that I was lying to myself.

"Why should we go from here simply because an old fool of a gardener talks through his hat?" He snapped his fingers derisively. "I've only been in this house before twice in my life. Once when I came to ask for Joan, and when I came to rent it from the trustee."

"Do you in your heart of hearts believe that John Marriott is alive?" I asked.

"Frankly I believe he is," he replied.

"Then why should he remain in hiding?"

"How can I answer for him?"

"If he is alive he must have heard of the search that has been made for him?"

"True," said Raymond. "But you should look at it from this angle. He hated me for taking Joan away from him. He told me in Kenya that he would never forgive me. You know that he was eccentric to a degree. Does it strike you as being a foolish theory—that he deliberately went away into the wilds, as it were, in order that suspicion might be fastened on me? He could be very vindictive, you know. He made poor old Mickleham's life a misery to him on occasion."

"He's only a gardener," I said, illogically.

"That may be," he retorted, "but even humble gardeners have feelings. And you may take it from me that Mickleham is not an ordinary gardener. Joan wasn't exaggerating when she hinted that he's given his very soul to these grounds. Why he should suspect me of this thing I can't say. He has always been so respectful to me since we came here."

We didn't return to the house till midday. We had grappled with every phase of the mystery imaginable, and I was satisfied that the youngster was white right through. That night the wind developed into a regular hurricane, and that voice—that awful voice—was more insistent than ever. The next morning I could see that Joan hadn't slept;

her eyes were red with weeping ; she glanced nervously about her as though she half expected some apparition to appear. Before noon I had persuaded them to take a holiday.

" Come down to my place for Christmas," said I. " There will be a goodly company and they'll help to calm your nerves."

" I don't like leaving the place," said Raymond.

Joan went to him and rested her hands on his shoulders.

" For God's sake let's go," she said, and there was a sob in her voice. " I've tried to be brave, knowing that you came here in order to silence traducers, but I've gone through agonies."

He patted her shoulder as she clung to him.

" Right," he said. " We'll go. Perhaps it was selfish of me to try to vindicate myself by coming here."

" We'll come back—if you wish," she said.

" I leave it to you, dear kiddie," he replied.

And they came away with me. I arranged with Mickleham that he should look after the grounds during their absence.

" They will be away nearly a month," I told him, and added : " There's just a chance they may not come back at all."

" I be satisfied," he said simply.

It was strange, you may think, that the wind died down the moment after they had decided to act on my suggestion. There was a lull, then a calm. That night the air was so still that not a twig in the grounds moved.

They came down to my place, about fifty miles away. The company that usually gathered for Christmas was more boisterous than ever. They made my old house rock with laughter. And the two sweethearts—and they were sweethearts—enjoyed themselves to the full. It was on Boxing Day that I received a telephonic message from a friend.

" I say," he said. " Have you heard the news ? "

" What news ? " I asked.

" About ' White Hawthorns,' " he said. " An old gardener has been found hanging from a tree on the lawn. Mickleham's his name."

As I heard those words, I heard also the remark of Mickleham as he asked me the impression I had taken of the hawthorn : " *Liftin' somethin' up*—eh ? "

I didn't break the news to Raymond until the next day. His reply amazed me :

" That's what I have always thought," he said. There he stopped and refused to qualify or explain his words.

They returned to " White Hawthorns." He hadn't told Joan a word about the hanging of Mickleham. All his actions struck me as being very calculated. I wished they were not going back, but I swear that I couldn't have given a reason why I should have felt like that.

I had to go abroad on business immediately after the new year dawned. I didn't return till about the April. Then I received a telegram from Raymond Dean.

" Come at once and help us."

I went down, tortured by doubts. It was evening when I arrived there, but the light was fairly good. They were distressed beyond describing.

" Come here," said Raymond, and urged me into the room where the French windows looked out on the lawn at the back of the house. " What do you see ? " he asked in a fearful whisper.

I looked at the white hawthorn.

I brushed my eyes with the back of my hand believing that I had made a mistake.

" It's true," he whispered hoarsely, reading my thoughts.

I looked again.

The blossom on the white hawthorn was *pink* ! Almost *blood-red* !

Inspiration came with the swiftness of the swallow's flight. I swung around to the trembling Joan.

" Go to your room," I said—commanded. And she went quickly.

To Raymond I said : " Get spades and come with me."

We began feverishly to dig around the roots of the white hawthorn. It was my spade that struck the obstacle in the ground.

We had found the body of John Marriott !

And we found in the cottage of Mickleham, the gardener, the brief, illiterate note he had left for Joan.

Only a gardener with the skill of Mickleham could have disturbed the roots of that hawthorn without killing them. It was under them that he had placed the body of the man who had tortured his " children "—the children of the garden—his flowers, his plants, his trees.

SILVER SHEET

By JOAN SUTHERLAND

ILLUSTRATED BY ROSETTA MANN

I.

ESTHER, taking the make-up off her face, looked reflectively in the mirror; seen in the harsh unshaded light over the dressing-table there were lines in her face normally hidden, shadows where no shadows should be, the freshness of youth already a thing of the past.

It was after all only to be expected. She was thirty-two, nearly thirty-three; life had been difficult these last years, with its craze for extreme youth and slimness and its endless powers of endurance and enjoyment. She was tired now, too tired to dance all night after working all day in the studios, too tired for parties and hard exercise when a day off released everyone from the lights and the cameras.

She still photographed well—Jack Rogers was a miracle of a camera man and performed marvels for her, but to-day another man had taken his place, a stranger; a young boy from one of the famous Californian studios, and Rogers was ill with influenza. The new man had given his chief skill in angles and lighting to the young star, Annette Temple, and Esther Grey, in a part almost as important and meant only to be slightly more mature, fared as she could. She dreaded the hour she would presently spend in the projection-room seeing the "rushes." She need not go of course, but it was Esther's habit to face up to the disagreeable things of life. Shirking made them worse in her opinion, added to their burden, and presently she went out of the dressing-room on to the wide gallery that ran round the entire wing of the great studios. On this gallery were the women's dressing-rooms, on the one above the men's, and below, on the big rectangular floor, was space for at least half a dozen "sets."

Lengyel, the director of the picture she was in, had just declared he would do no more that day, and Esther had hurried off, glad to have the chance of getting some shopping done before she went to the projection-room.

She stopped now a moment to look down at the set where work was in progress—the boat-deck of the *Mauretania*, fascinating in its correctness, where a big scene was being rehearsed—and at that moment a girl spoke her name and she found the famous star, Annette Temple, at her side.

"That new man—the American—is a marvel!" she exclaimed. "Say a prayer for him to photograph us to-morrow—oh, by the way, Bunny wants you."

"Bunny" was the assistant-director, and Esther, a little anxious, went down to seek him amidst the seeming confusion and amazing litter of a big indoor studio floor. Scenery, flats, furniture, iron braces, ladders, electrical fitments, hurrying workmen, tools, lights—all jostling one another, with here and there order out of chaos, cameras and tense faces, and the artists on some set, playing.

"Bunny" Wright took no notice of either the star or the featured player, Esther Grey; instead, a shade over his eyes, he stood by one of the four cameras watching and shouting his orders to the crowd that were on the deck set. By his side stood a tall, lithe figure in shabby tweeds, a hat tilted over one eye, hands in pockets, and a casual air of being completely at home rare in a visitor to the studios.

Annette dismissed him with scarcely a glance, but Esther as she drew into an unobtrusive corner was puzzled. Surely she knew that face with its clean-cut, arrogant features, its curiously intense gaze—could it be John Carrick—could it?

The glare of the lights, the shouts of the director, the sudden cranking of the cameras, the hush that made the fateful sound audible, then a fade-out, the tension relaxing and a well-known voice saying:

"Very good effect——"

Yes, it *was* John Carrick and Esther felt

a little thrill run through her; he was famous throughout two continents as an actor; through the world as a film star. He came of a well-known artistic family, he was clever and interesting as well as a great artist. The director nodded, said: "So? Have you time the rushes to see?"

Carrick glanced at his watch.

"Yes," and, turning round abruptly, nearly fell over Esther. He drew back, said:

"I beg your pardon!" and Lengyel, the Belgian director loaned from America, pulled her forward by the arm.

"This is Esther Grey. You will her see presently if you to the projection-room come."

Carrick held out his hand, giving Esther a long, intent look.

"So you are Esther Grey? I saw you once four or five years ago in a picture called 'Pardon.'"

"You remembered!" Esther said incredulously, and he nodded.

"Yes. Very well. It was before I acted for the screen, but I looked for you when I played my first picture."

"That is very good news. It will be a help."

"Help?"

"Encouragement. Everybody needs that sometimes, Mr. Carrick. Even you?"

He nodded, his face grown sombre.

"I most of all. Don't let me lose sight of you again."

Before she could answer Annette Temple had come up, touched his arm, and spoken to him smiling, the slow lovely smile that entranced her "fans," and began discussing the script. Esther saw the two of them walking off arm in arm, Carrick's head bent towards hers in close attention.

Her heart ached a little as she slipped into the projection-room a few minutes later. The lights went down just as she entered and the seat next hers was vacant until the film had been running for some ten minutes. Then someone took it, but she did not notice whom; she was too intent on the screen, too wrought up with what she saw there. Annette was lovely, appealing, gracious; Carrick must surely admire her, and the part was such a good one; as for herself—well, it was just what she had dreaded for the last few years. The new camera man had been neither kind nor skilful; the shadows were too heavy, the lines wrong, she looked her age and more, and she was once and for all relegated to the background; sitting there in the darkness, the tears running down her face, she tried to control the deep catch of her breath that would betray her, and, failing, covered it by a cough. Whereupon the man next to her spoke and startled her into calmness, for it was Carrick.

He was not speaking to her but to Lengyel, who sat on his other side, and his voice was eager.

"By Jove, that's a fine piece of work! Exquisite! I must be off now, but I want her for Constance Bonacieux in my D'Artagnan picture."

Was it possible? Esther sat so still she hardly dared breathe, and heard Lengyel's answer:

"Pity she show her age. Not to play juveniles any more."

"She can *act*!" Carrick said shortly, and Esther, trembling, waited for more, but no more came. Carrick relapsed into silence till he left a little later. When the "rushes" were finished, Esther prepared to go home, feeling the world at her feet. The great Carrick had praised her, had said she could act, had said he wanted her to play with him—all night the wonderful thought was with her, invading her dreams, filling her waking hours; on the morrow, surely, either Harker or Conrad Lengyel would send for her and tell her she had been chosen for lead with John Carrick!

But the morrow came and other morrows. Esther finished the film knowing that Carrick had gone to Paris, and the day before his return to London she went down with the fiend, influenza.

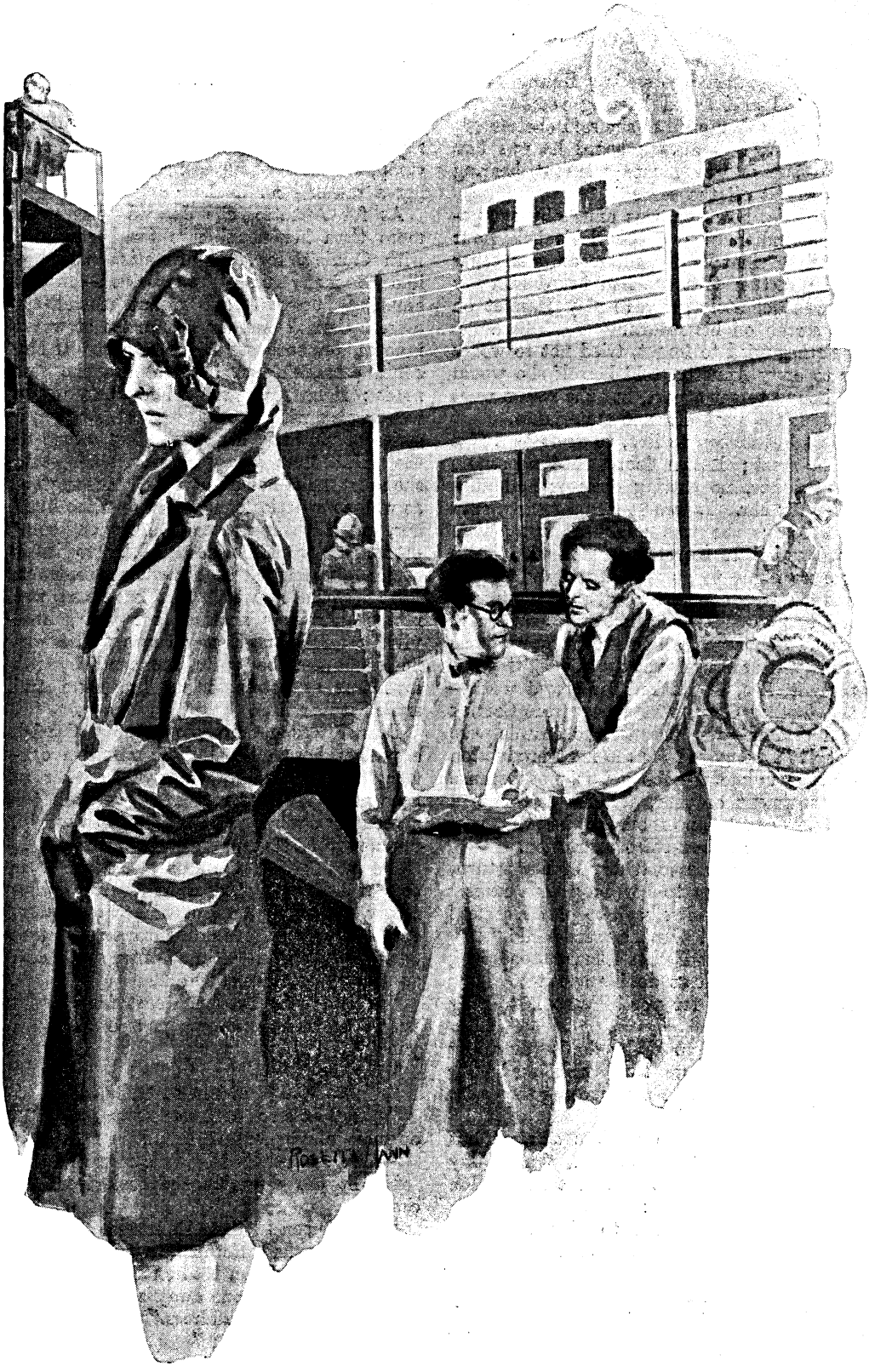
When, shaky and limp, she went back to the studio, Carrick had left for America and Lengyel told her kindly but inexorably in his faulty English that there was no part for her in the next picture and advised her to go away to the sea and the sun and have a good rest. "Which means I look old and faded!" Esther said bitterly to herself, thanked him and went away.

After all, he was right. She was too old; compared with Annette she was a middle-aged woman, but even middle-aged women have their ambitions, let alone their feelings, so before she left the studio she went to Bunny Harker and quoted Carrick's words, whereupon Bunny laid a kindly hand on her arm and shook his head.

"Carrick says a great deal he only half means," he said. "He sailed to New York last week. Changed his mind about the



"Before she could answer Annette Temple had come up, touched his arm, and spoken to him smiling."



Musketeer picture. I doubt if he even remembers you to-day."

Esther managed to smile: Bunny was a kind soul and hated hurting people; besides, she was proud, so she said cheerfully:

"I know! I always heard he was like that—but it was rather pleasant hearing him say it all the same!"

Annette, however, was unusually sympathetic, indignant over Carrick's behaviour in saying what he did not mean, and eager to tell Esther that she had heard him say he was definitely going to play Hamlet on the screen on his return.

Esther tried to forget, tried not to worry or to envy Annette, told herself she would be bound to get a part, but the weeks went on and the part did not materialise.

It takes money to live, to dress as a film artist must; Esther found that no studio wanted her, no casting director had anything for her. It was so late a spring, grey and cold; she was angry at first, then anxious, then secretly frightened. There was no home to go to. Her only brother was a struggling doctor with a young wife and two children—she had only herself and her own courage to help her, so there came a day when she went back to the big Gaynesford Studios, and asked for crowd work—she, Esther Grey, whom the great Carrick had praised—and because the crowds were not yet all engaged for the next production—name unknown—she got it, not because of sentiment or pity, for the screen is a business and has no room for the artist who is no longer a box-office attraction.

There, on the second day of her return, Annette came up to her agog with news.

"Carrick's coming back to play Hamlet! I've got Ophelia! Isn't it wonderful!"

For a moment Esther's heart stood still, then it raced on at double speed.

"How lovely for you! Who is to play the Queen?"

"Jane Ramsden. Why don't you apply for the gentlewoman? Carrick liked your acting, didn't he? He's choosing the caste. He'd give it you."

Esther made some careless answer, but the knife turned in the wound. On the day that Carrick was due to arrive in London Annette said joyfully:

"He's wirelessed me to dine with him to-night. I shall mention you."

"Please don't!" Esther said, sharply for her, "I'd rather not. Let me get my own jobs, Annette."

"All right, my dear. Just as you like!" Annette rejoined. "Only I thought Jack might do it if I asked him."

So it was Jack now . . . he must be very intimate with her—perhaps in love. She was beautiful enough, and Esther, who had a pagan passion for beauty, felt she understood, even though life seemed to have given her a rather poor deal.

As for Annette, she dressed with even more than her usual care for her dinner with Carrick, for this invitation was not like so many that she received—casual, amusing, useless—this meant something more. Carrick was a great artist of world renown, on both stage and screen. If she could establish herself with him she was made; if he really liked her work, if she was to play with him not only once but in a series of pictures, her reputation as one of the great stars was secure. At all costs she must make herself personally interesting as well as artistically necessary; if he liked her, found her an agreeable, charming companion, he would be more likely to insist that she be signed on for a long contract.

So when she met Carrick her heart was racing, her eyes shining, her young face vividly alive; used as he was to beauty, he could not be quite unmoved by her loveliness as she held out her hand and smiled up at him.

Dinner was a complete success, Carrick a perfect host. He did not mention contracts or the studios, but treated her as he would have treated any guest unconnected with work, yet Annette felt vaguely, unreasonably disappointed. She wanted to make sure of him, not as a lover but as one of the most important figures in her future life and the pivot of her ambition; and so, a little after midnight, as they came back to their table after a waltz, she spoke, as she hoped, carelessly:

"Have you settled the cast for Hamlet yet? You are to choose your own, aren't you?"

"Nearly. Yes."

"You approve of me as Ophelia?"

"Yes," he said, and smiled at her. "I approve of you—as Ophelia!"

"And the others? The Queen?"

He lit the cigarette she took from his case.

"The Queen? Jane Ramsden. But I'd rather have had Esther Grey—only she's disappeared. When I wired Lengyel about her he said she'd gone away to the country and he hadn't her address."

"You wanted her?"

Carrick nodded. Ever since he had seen Esther with that heavenly tenderness in her face in the projection-room of the Gaynesford Studios, he had wanted her. She was not in her first youth, not beautiful, but there was something in her face, something in the soul that looked out through her brown eyes, that pierced all his armour, that made him think of her, dream of her, determine to find her and make her not only famous but loving. So now he said again, a queer intensity in his voice:

"Yes. I wanted her—more than anyone else."

"Esther?" A pang of fear shot through Annette's heart at his tone. "Oh, but you——"

She broke off and he looked at her.

"You—what?"

"Oh—nothing! Please, it was nothing!"

Annette protested, for her exclamation had been wholly involuntary. "Who is to have Laertes?"

"I don't know—haven't decided. But I'm interested in Miss Grey. She can act."

"She's a darling——" Was he thinking of Esther as a future lead? Just as if it mattered half so much as her own inclusion in the cast who else played in Hamlet! "Only—of course she's not going to stay on the screen. She's—she's going to be married. But it's quite a secret. I ought not to have told you. You won't mention it? Promise!"

"Of course not," he said, rather shortly, and Annette sat back in her chair breathing a little quickly, hardly able to believe that it had been herself who had uttered those words.

What had possessed her? What in the world had made her say such a thing? And now, how could she take it back? Horrified at herself, dismayed at the harm she might have accomplished, she pushed back her chair and rose to her feet, exclaiming:

"Let's dance. This is such a gorgeous tune!" and tried in movement to stifle thought.

II.

JOHN CARRICK carefully trod out his cigarette, looked up at the grey sky, crossed the paved roadway between the studios, and entered the building on its farther side.

Once within the vast building with its humming activity, its bewildering seeming confusion of sets, scenery, building materials, properties, lamps, he threaded his way to his own set, went up to a little group of people and spoke to the assistant-director.

"Where is Miss Ramsden?"

"Not here yet. 'Phoned to say she'd be ten minutes late. Car burst a tyre or something of the sort."

"I wish people would allow for possible delays," the other said irritabiy. "Is everyone else here?"

"Yes."

Carrick looked round.

"H'm. Poisonously cold this place is! Got everything ready for the scene? What about those other foils?"

He left the assistant-director before the questions were all answered and went across the stage to speak to Annette, who had just come in, muffled up in a coat of silver-coloured squirrel with a black velvet hat almost hiding her eyes.

"Good morning. Oooh! Isn't it cold? How d'you like London after New York this weather?"

"Very much—if I'd time to see anything of it."

"I'll show you," Annette said demurely. "There's quite a lot to be seen, you know."

He looked at her without speaking, then a faint smile crept to his mouth and he nodded.

"Yes. I imagine so. Perhaps you might begin this evening and suggest a place where we can dine together."

"And dance?"

"If you like."

"I do like. Here's the Queen."

Jane Ramsden, who had been cast for Gertrude, came across the shadowy space at the back of the set and up to Carrick, and Annette slipped away quite content with the result of her few seconds' conversation—Carrick was going to take her out again to dinner.

Her scheme progressed, for Carrick was attracted, as he might well be, by her beauty and fresh youth, and very well pleased by her work in a somewhat thankless part. But as the days passed he became more and more dissatisfied with Jane Ramsden's performance as the Queen, for Jane, a well-known star, had her own ideas as to its rendering and had no intention of giving way to the direction or the opinions of the famous American actor. Politely obstinate, she played as she thought—and played extremely well—but Carrick was even more used to his own way than she to hers, and the results were obstruction, unpleasantness, and some display of temper. Finally, in a towering rage, he broke off in the middle of

the scene while Jane sat on a chair idly playing with the string of jade that formed a lovely note of colour on her black dress and talking indifferently with Horatio, who was one of her most ardent admirers.

"I'm not going to put up with it any longer. Find me another woman to play it—anyone! I don't care, but this is the end of it—get her out—I won't finish the scene. She's worse than an amateur!"

Carrick's furious tones were clearly audible to Jane Ramsden's ears, and at them she shrugged her shoulders, smiled at the little group about her, and rising to her feet walked slowly across to him, a superbly beautiful woman, regal, and tall as he was.

"My dear man, I am really delighted you have saved me the trouble of resigning my part," she said mockingly. "I played the Queen with Herbert Johnstone, as you know, and really your interpretation is so peculiar that I cannot afford myself the pleasure of following your wishes. I wish you the greatest success but I prefer not to share in it."

Carrick bit his lip, bowed silently, and turned on his heel. Jane Ramsden walked quite deliberately off the set and disappeared, and the director shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, that's that! Who in the devil's name can I get? You've got to leave in a fortnight and the picture is not half through! We're in a nice mess."

"Stop talking, please!" Carrick interposed sharply. "I'll see about it afterwards! This is work, not a monkey-house!"

This was so unlike the courteous Carrick that silence was instantaneous, and the little crowd melted away from the stage without even a murmur. The day went stormily on, for Carrick was highly strung and extremely temperamental and he was furiously angry at the whole occurrence.

III.

TO watch Carrick rehearse was most interesting, and Esther had attended the studio with unfailing regularity, even when not called, which action annoyed Annette unreasonably.

"It's so funny of you when there's nothing for you to do here," Annette remarked late that evening in a pause between scenes. "Anyone would think you had a crush on John!"

"It's educational for anyone to watch him," Esther said: but she knew Annette, and Annette was jealous of her having any share—even the slightest—in her friendship with Carrick—as if she had!

Why, he did not even remember her existence! Had never seen she was here—she had taken good care he should not—or troubled to ask after her: the woman he had seen on the screen in the projection-room and praised so highly! Meanwhile the scene was rehearsed again and again, and finally shot, and Lengyel announced that he was through for the present and everyone could go home.

Esther turned away, hurrying through the shadows to avoid Carrick. Carrick, grim and furious, cursed Jane Ramsden and finally turned on Bunny Harker.

"If you'd been half awake you could have found Esther Grey for me," he said angrily. "She was an artist."

"Esther Grey? She's in the crowd scenes now! I thought you knew it."

"Knew it? You——" Carrick restrained himself by a violent effort. "Why do you think I wired for her?"

"She wasn't here then. She only came back a week ago. Been ill. We hadn't her address."

"You're a lot of idiots!" Carrick said shortly. "I want her for the Queen. Find her."

The great artist had to be placated, for he was quite capable of walking off the set and refusing to finish the picture. Harker sent messengers flying, and presently Esther was found, and with her, Annette, her lovely face rather set, her eyes wary. Esther looked pale and worn and terribly thin, but her eyes shone like stars as he spoke to her.

"Miss Grey—I've just found out you were here. I want you to take Jane Ramsden's part. Lengyel agrees. Will you?"

"Will I?" A little flicker of laughter danced over her tired face. "Fancy even troubling to ask me!"

"Very well, then, Thursday at nine. And since there are several matters I should like to talk over with you, will you dine with me to-morrow? Berkeley—eight?"

"Thank you," said Esther demurely, and Carrick turned without another word, without returning her smile or even granting her the courtesy of a farewell, and as he sat in his car he thought bitterly of the irony of it all. The fate that had made him fall in love with Esther rather than with Annette—fall in love completely and hopelessly, so that all the careless affairs of his life faded utterly and he knew he could never again care for any woman if Esther refused to marry him. He,



"'Miss Grey—I've just found out you were here. I want you to take Jane Ramsden's part. Lengyel agrees. Will you?'"

John Carrick, who had believed himself immune, who had trifled so often, loved so often, that he had grown utterly *blasé*—he was in love, hopelessly, desperately. And not with the lovely young girl who shared his triumphs, but with Esther. Esther, who was so steadfast of soul, whose dark eyes looked out with such smiling courage upon a difficult world . . . Esther.

Later Annette set her lips in a hard little line and, watching the smoke of her cigarette curl upwards, said to Carrick :

" I told you Esther was going to be married, didn't I ? Well, she's not. She can't be."

" Can't be ? What do you mean ? Do you mean she's in love with someone she can't marry ? " he asked, and there was a sudden roughness in his voice that told its own tale to Annette's astounded brain.

" You're very interested in Esther all of a sudden," she said. " Why Jack ? "

His answer was to repeat his question.

" Is she in love ? " And almost without Annette realising it, she heard herself say : " Yes. Now, are you satisfied ? I—I didn't know it before."

After all, why not ? She was in love, Annette was sure, with Carrick, so in effect the words were true.

" Why doesn't she marry him, then ? "

Annette bit her lip ; this was becoming involved, and she found, as many others have found, that one lie leads to another.

" She—oh—oh, he's married."

The best way out of it surely . . . and after all, what has it to do with Carrick ?

" He's in love with her ? "

Annette moved restlessly, horrified to find whither speech was leading her, and quite unable to extricate herself.

" Esther would just die if people didn't love her," she said hurriedly. " And she's a darling—you don't understand—you're not to judge her or—or think less of her."

Carrick sat quite still for a few minutes, a careless yet powerful figure in the black Hamlet dress. Then, with apparent carelessness, he rose to his feet and without a word left her.

So that was it ? Esther was like all the rest, like he himself had so often been, the victim of self-indulgence that she called love. And he had thought her something altogether different and wonderful ! Esther whose eyes were so clear and honest, in the thought of whom he had found such a sense of rest and contentment. He cursed himself for a fool, he, John Carrick, with all his experience of the world, to fall in love with a woman because she played a part on the screen exquisitely ! Fool—fool—and going to the table he scribbled a note :

" Dear Miss Grey,—

I am exceedingly sorry but I fear our dinner must be put off after all. Something has arisen that makes it impossible. A thousand apologies for my behaviour.

Yours regretfully,
John Carrick."

When the note was written he went in search of someone to take it to her dressing-room, then went back and took up a book to read—a hopeless proceeding, as he soon found, for not only did Esther's face come repeatedly between his eyes and the page, but he could not fix his attention, and at last gave up and went to bed.

As for Esther, she read the little note through twice, then dropped it in the fire, a bitter smile on her lips.

At nine on Thursday she was on the set, made up, but her scenes with Hamlet were not taken till late in the afternoon, when everyone was jaded and weary. Carrick had not spoken to her, and even Annette was looking uneasy. Disheartened, Esther found herself listening mechanically to Lengyel's instructions before Carrick came on.

When he did come on he was as wooden as she was and the director—no respecter of persons—became more and more impatient. There came the moment when Hamlet was to cease his reproaches and fling himself at his mother's feet, his arms about her waist. Esther sat perfectly still, but her pulses beat furiously as Carrick, his face so near to hers, caught her arms.

He was acting now, his eyes wild, his face haggard ; as he held her his arms trembled and Lengyel cried out sharply :

" Camera ! Camera ! "

The cameras began and Esther, half stunned, heard Carrick's low passionate words, words so strange that she could hardly believe her ears.

" I've looked for you—loved you because you were so different—loved you ever since you played that part—Esther—and you're the same as the rest—no woman is any different——"

The cameras ceased, and Lengyel cried :

" It ees damn' good ! " There was a general stir to take a close-up of Hamlet, and Esther, white beneath her grease-paint, waited, trembling with indignation. That the words must have been overheard was certain ; that his acting was more than half-truth, apparent to camera men, directors,

watchers, alike. Furious, bewildered, indignant, she stood there, and when one of the lights fused and there was a wait she tried to keep out of his way till she had regained self-control. In vain, however, for he found her and spoke abruptly, almost roughly.

"Will you come and dine with me?" he said, and, amazed, she spoke icily:

"Why should I? You have insulted me—why, I don't know, but at least I can see that you have no second opportunity."

"Because I said you were like all the rest? Well, aren't you?"

"I am not sure to what 'rest' you refer," she said, lifting her eyes to his and holding herself very still. "You are a famous star, Mr. Carrick, and I am quite unknown. Once you praised my work very highly. It meant a great deal to me, that praise—more than you can guess. I was very discouraged and you gave me encouragement. I have never presumed upon that kindness, yet suddenly you speak to me as you spoke just now. I do not understand your behaviour. But I resent it—bitterly."

For a moment he was silent; then he made a little queer gesture with both hands.

"Annette told me——"

"Annette?" Esther started. "What did Annette tell you?"

"That you were in love—a married man."

"And you believed it? When you say you love me yourself? Besides——"

A shout from Lengyel interrupted them.

"Carrick! Carrick! Where in the name of all the deffuls ees that man? Carrick, I say!"

Harker rushed up.

"They're waiting—want to retake the scene between Hamlet and the Queen." Esther turned on her heel and swept past Carrick to the lights and glare of the set.

Yet she hardly knew how to calm herself enough to get through the scene. He loved her—and he had thought this of her—and Annette had done this thing. Annette, her friend, had tried to wreck her happiness! Her thoughts were in a whirl, she found herself shaking from head to foot. Suddenly she felt a hand on her arm and saw the actor who played the King standing beside her.

"Frightened?" he whispered. "No need to be—you are splendid! Better than Jane Ramsden. Don't be scared!"

She managed to smile at him, and though the sympathy was misdirected, it served to pull her together, for in the overwhelming thing that had come upon her she had for a moment forgotten the chance that was hers. Grateful for the kindly thought, she clenched teeth and hands to regain her self-control. A minute later when she walked on the stage and sat down with the lights full on her she was outwardly calm and mistress of herself.

Then came Carrick and the scene began; his rage with his mother, his reproaches, his fury at finding and killing Polonius. Then, once again, he flung himself at her knees, his arms about her, his face against her breast, and she knew suddenly that it was not Hamlet beseeching his mother to leave the King she had so heartlessly married, but Carrick pleading with her to forgive him.

She acted magnificently, even she herself knew that. Then Hamlet, grief for his father and love for his mother overwhelming him, let his head drop into her lap, and she heard his voice low and broken:

"Forgive me—I love you! I love you!"

In spite of herself, her arms tightened about him, in spite of herself her anger fled, and when Carrick raised his head a moment later and she saw his face the last shred of her resentment fled . . . he loved her . . . what else mattered?

IT was over at last. Esther slipped away, and Carrick on his way to his dressing-room found Annette waiting.

"Oh, Jack—let's go off and really fly round! You were wonderful! We can have the most tremendous fun now the darned old picture is finished. Hurry up and dress!"

Carrick looked at the eager, lovely face.

"I am afraid I am not at liberty to-night," he said slowly. "Where's Esther?"

"Esther?" Annette echoed. "Oh, she's gone to her room. Wasn't she good?"

"She was more than good," he said. "Come with me. I want to offer my congratulations."

"How dear of you!" Annette said. "She'll be so pleased," and together they went to Esther's dressing-room. She had taken off her crown and the ropes of jewels, and looked tired, almost plain, but Carrick went up to her and stood quite still.

"I am bitterly ashamed of myself," he said very quietly, "I have no excuse to offer, but I love you with all my heart—will you forgive me? If you cannot I will not worry you again—but for Heaven's sake believe me—I love you!"

Annette opened her lips to exclaim but the exclamation never passed them, for Esther held out her arms and Carrick went straight into them and hid his face against hers. Quite noiselessly, Annette went from the room and closed the door behind her.

SHORT STEPS TO KNOWLEDGE

By *Laurence Housman*

WILD OATS AND WIDOW'S WEEDS.

Illustrated by Charles Grave.

"PRAY, dear Mamma," Matilda pleads,
"What are wild oats and widow's weeds?
They seem a curious kind of growth:
Tell me, where can I find them both?"





"Like chickens they come home to roost!"

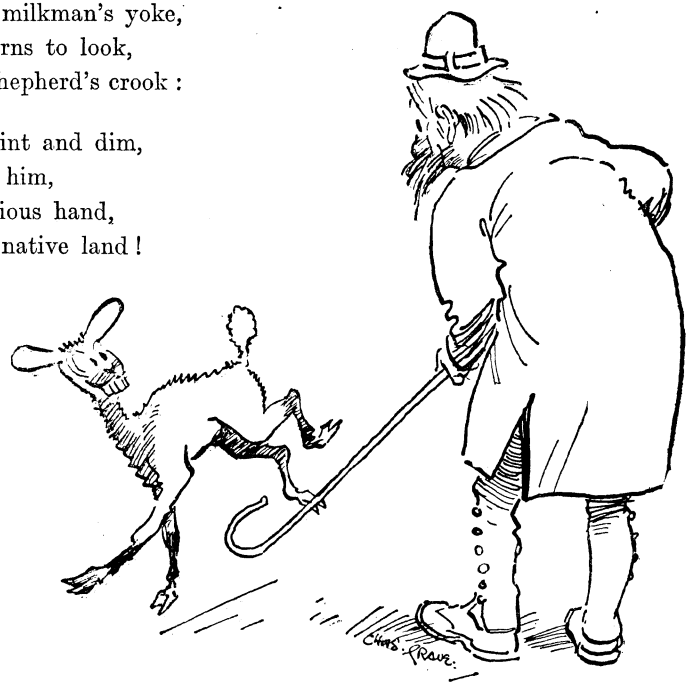
"Misguided child!" cried Mrs. Grey,
"Alas, you know not what to say!
Speak not, if you would spare me pain,
In the same breath those words again!

"A widow's weeds—those watered flowers—
Sad symbols are of happier hours:
A memory, a sacred trust,
They grow from consecrated dust.

"Wild oats—oh! could I bring my tongue
To tell you how, when broadcast flung,
And from a careless hand once loosed,
Like chickens they come home to roost!

"The pitcher at the fountain broke,
The milk spilled from the milkman's yoke,
The heedless leap that scorns to look,
The sheep that shuns the shepherd's crook:

"These are but figures, faint and dim,
Of the dark fate awaiting him,
Who blindly, with an impious hand,
Strews with wild oats his native land!



"The sheep that shuns the shepherd's crook!"



"A widow's weeds of dark despair."

"A widow's weeds of dark despair,
I trust that you may never wear:
What wild oats mean, and how they grow,
I trust that you will never know!"

Matilda to her mother's word
Attended, with emotions stirred;
Then said: "But why do widow's weeds
And wild oats sometimes mix their seeds?

"For I heard Mrs. Taylor say
To Mrs. Brown, the other day,
That, when ill weeds have grown apace,
Other things follow in their place.

"But Mrs. Taylor doubted whether
They did not really grow together:
Sometimes, she said, they mix their seeds;
Then from wild oats come widow's weeds."

"If Mrs. Taylor tattled less,
And minded her own business,"
Said Mrs. Grey, with features fixed,
"She'd get her metaphors less mixed!

"And if you could have tried, my sweet,
Not to remember or repeat
Such tattle, you would not have lacked
That valuable thing called 'tact.'"





[*Fox Photos.*

SANTORO AND HIS DAUGHTER ON THE BRIDGE MANIPULATING A DELICATE PUPPET MOVEMENT.

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE ITALIAN MARIONETTES

By W. S. MEADMORE

A VISIT behind the scenes to a Marionette theatre is a delightful and fantastic experience. You plunge from prosaic streets into a magic world of colour and illusion. Even the spectacle of a small stage set upon the real stage is strange and prepares one for unexpected things.

Standing in the wings, I watched the pretty ladies of the ballet. They had just finished a number, and here they were all leaping towards me, in the same graceful way that their professional sisters of the ballet retire from the stage to make way for the principals. As they came, I found myself stepping back with a bow to let them pass, just as I should have done had they been of flesh and blood. But to my astonishment, instead of going to their dressing-rooms, they all suddenly rose in the air and remained suspended in the wings.

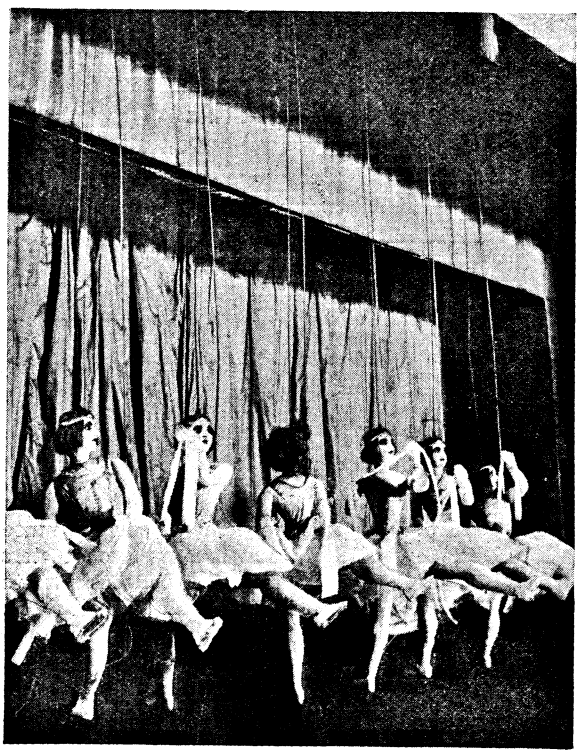
There they were, all hanging upon little wires, and waiting their turn to be hooked down again. In the meantime they were swaying and peering at me in the most realistic fashion, and I swear that two hussies were grimacing at me. Right across the miniature stage, which had its own little set of head- and foot-lights, I could see into the opposite wing, where two characters were having the finishing touches put to their costume before they made their *début*. It must have been a trying moment for them, but they seemed quite unconcerned. Santoro's daughter was pinning a brooch to one and arranging a curl on the other. And as she bent to give a final tug at their dresses they all responded, as it were, with little gestures of impatience.

At first you are surprised at the smallness of the figures. The tallest is but a bare four feet. Yet in front, so complete is the illusion, you could be sure they were life size. Even as you stand in the wings they seem to grow bigger, for their demeanour and their actions are so real, that after a time you are convinced that they are as much alive as you are. Perhaps more so!

Above the visible part of the Marionette stage—that is, the part the audience can see—stretches an overhead gallery or bridge. Here, bending over the hand-rail, are eight manipulators. Their sixteen hands moved hundreds of threads, which gave movement to the group of dancers below. Yet the

threads rarely got mixed. How the fingers of those hands worked! It was as if they were all playing pianos at an inconceivable speed. And the swiftness with which the marionettes were passed from hand to hand and from manipulator to manipulator! For there is little room on the bridge for the marionettists to move, and if a figure has to cross the stage, it must, perforce, be guided from one pair of hands to the next.

Most of the time the manipulators stand, or rather stoop, in one position. In the centre is Santoro, the chief manipulator. Propped in front of him is the prompt copy of the piece that is being performed. Not only has he to watch the conductor in order to synchronise the movements of the marionettes with the beat of the music, but also to prompt and supervise his assistants as well as to manipulate his particular marionettes.



[*General Photographic Agency.*

THE MARIONETTE BALLET FROM THE WINGS.
The illusion from the front is extraordinarily realistic.

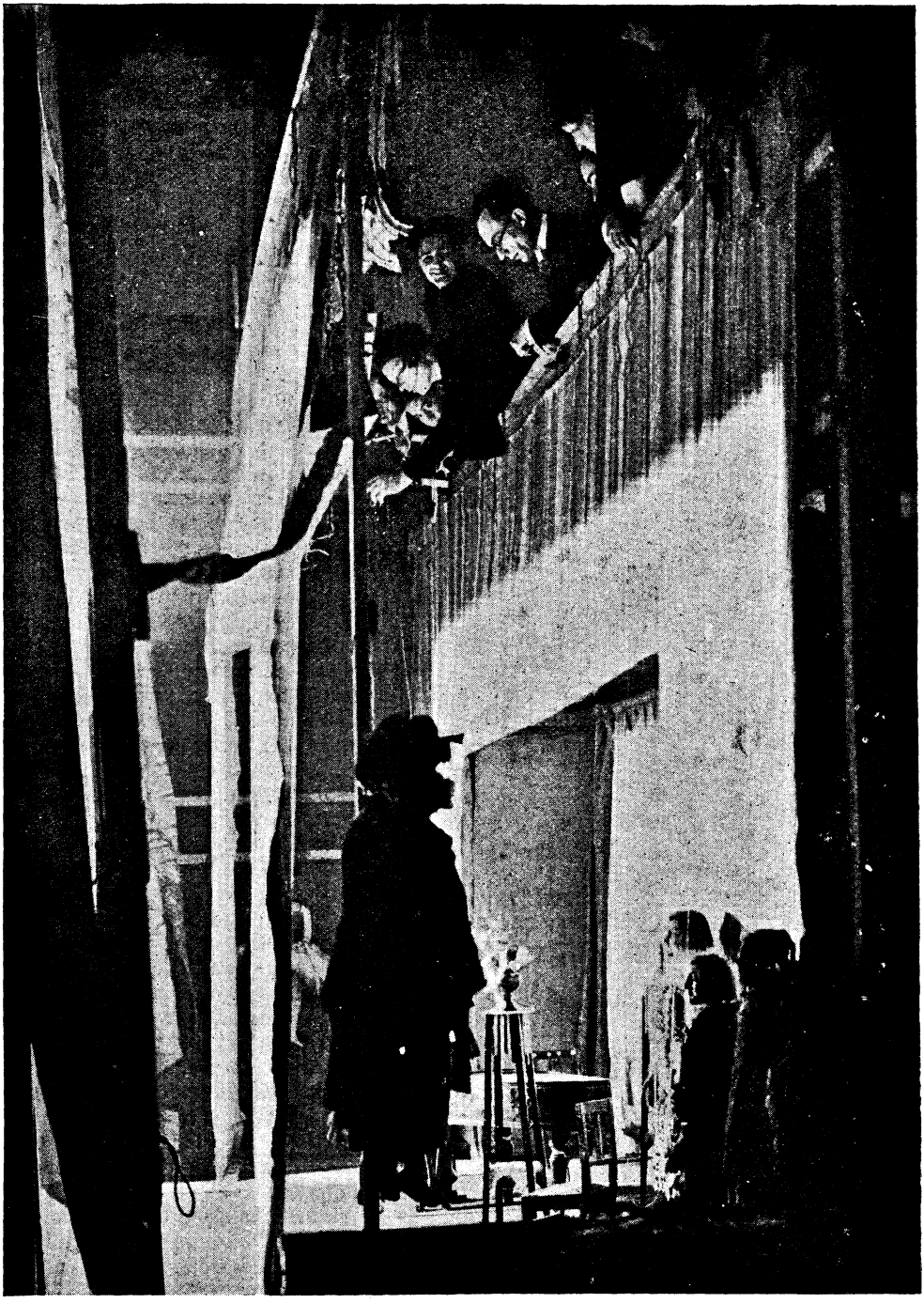
Each marionette has some ten or twelve strings suspended from a wooden cross, which is called the " balance." This is held in the manipulator's hand and it is thus that the movements of the little people are controlled. The strain on the wrist is very great, for nearly all the marionettes are made of wood, and weigh at least five or six pounds. Also they are suspended from a height of about twelve feet. Yet Santoro will often work two or even more figures at the same time. He does this by taking one balance in his mouth and holding another in his hand.

Upon the faces of the manipulators beats the heat of the lights. Now and then one of them clambers at breakneck speed down and up a vertical ladder which leads from the side of the bridge to the stage. Hurried instructions are continually being shouted from the bridge to the helpers below. Never for a moment are the manipulators able to stop for a rest. No wonder that when at last the curtain descends, they come down the ladder with perspiration streaming from their faces.

In this little theatre it is rare for accidents not to happen. Santoro took me by the arm. " It is annoying," he said. " I have broken a leg." I looked at him in dismay, and wondered if anyone could take his place. " Will you be able to continue ? " I innocently said. " Oh, that dancer will not appear again to-night," he replied quite seriously, " but to-morrow I must make her another leg." To Santoro anything that happens to his mannikins happens to him. He regards them as children.

I gathered that there had been a great many mishaps on this particular evening. Santoro showed me his notebook and a page was filled with queer statements: " Mend torn beard " ; " Curl Cassandra's wig " ; " Make a new tail for the horse " ; " Blow out the circus balloons " ; " Clean the clown's shoes " ; " Stuff the dogs " ; " Charcoal, spirits of wine, wire and bee's wax to buy " ; " Make a new costume for the Tarantella dancer " ; " Make a new nose for Bil-Bal-Bul."

Now, for a moment, there was confusion on the little stage. The characters in the ballet which had just finished were being unhooked from their rests at the sides of the wings, to make way for the figures who



[*General Photographic Agency.*

THE MARIONETTE STAGE FROM THE WINGS.

Note the suspended puppets waiting their turn to appear.

were about to go on for the music-hall turns. The dancers ogled the cyclists, the clowns, and the harlequins as they passed each other.

I followed the ballet to the back of the real stage. Here I discovered some hundreds of marionettes all hanging from stretched wires. It was the queerest medley. Soldiers rubbed shoulders with fairies. There were noble lords and sailors, deep-sea monsters, horses and donkeys, cabaret girls and Italian peasants, Spanish dancers and



[*Fox Photos.*

A BROKEN PUPPET !

A marionette has been injured during a performance and Santoro is estimating the damage.

smiling gentlemen in evening-dress. There were beggars and there were ladies with diamonds sparkling on their fingers and pearls around their necks. There was, in fact, hardly a type that was not represented.

I was startled by the profusion of faces and their curious reality. Here was a grinning fellow who was the very likeness of the man who had eaten next to me at dinner. Many of the figures indeed reminded me of friends and acquaintances. They were people I met every day.

Sometimes I would find two figures who were exactly alike hanging next to each other. It was explained that they were differently jointed, so that one figure could move its limbs in a way that was impossible to the other. Thus two marionettes had to represent one character. I think the mannikins have the advantage of human beings there ! It would be delightful to be able to employ a second self when there is anything unpleasant to be done.

In one corner three puppets were huddled together. One represented a young man with healthy cheeks and clear eyes. The next was middle-aged. The colour had gone from the cheeks and there were lines round the eyes. The last was a very old man, with hollow cheeks, a bald head and toothless jowl. Yet a curious resemblance persisted in the three figures. It was, in fact, the same character. In the drama in which he plays he ages twenty years in the intervals between the three short acts.

A geisha girl attracted attention. She was really most attractive and I stopped in front of her for a long time. A manipulator put out his hand to gather her threads. I almost said, " It's a pity to disturb her," but already she was curtseying to me upon the floor, pirouetting upon her toes, and her arms moving with the grace of a prima ballerina of the Russian Ballet. She was charming ! I wished I had the audacity to inquire her address.

One could spend a day in the company of these charming people. They are so unconscious of their attractiveness, they never bore you with stories of their past successes, they are never put out by your stares, they are impervious to flattery and they are neither vain nor jealous. Indeed, they are object lessons not only to their brothers and sisters of the real stage but to all of us.

At one side of the stage is the workroom and wardrobe. The company make all the dolls and their costumes and even the scenery.

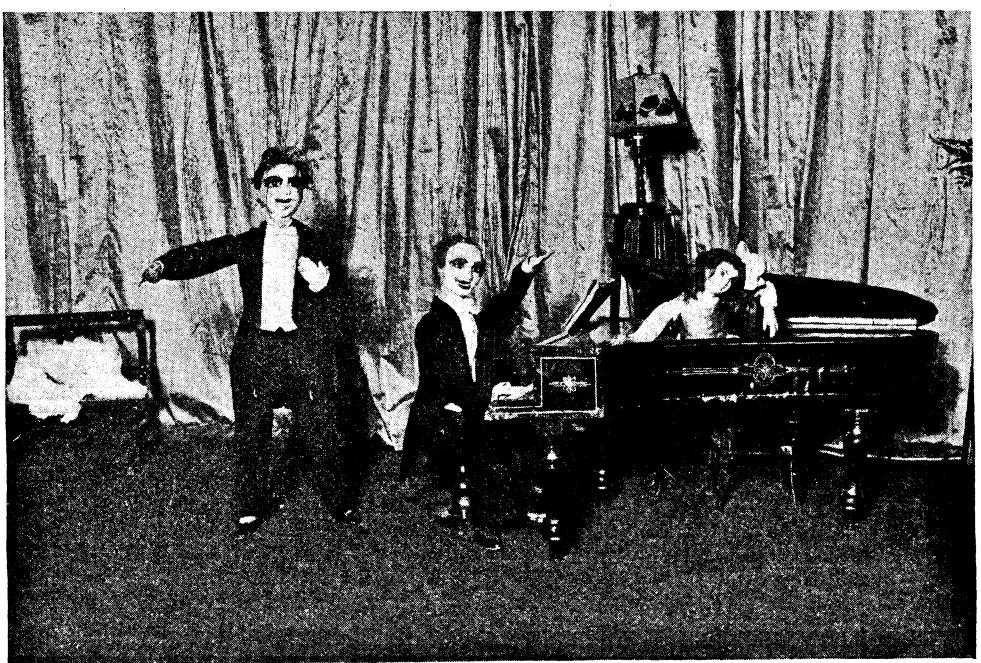
Like the manipulators' craft, the art of making the marionettes is inherited. The faces are carved with marvellous skill. But the real trouble and the art is in the



[*Fox Photos.*

WAITING TO "GO ON!"

jointing of the limbs and the places where the threads are put. For on this solely depends the movements which the marionettes can make. A thread ever so slightly misplaced will make a marionette limp instead of walk. The features on the faces are slightly exaggerated, but everything else is in perfect proportion.



[*Fox Photos.*

BURLESQUE OF A CONCERT PARTY.



[*Fox Photos.*

A GROUP OF LITTLE PEOPLE.
The wardrobe mistress repairing dresses.

Everything that the marionettes wear is made in this wardrobe. Much of the work requires extraordinary patience. There are slippers to make which even Cinderella could not struggle into, to say nothing of such things as parasols and vanity bags.

Here in this workroom are laid bare many of those secret tricks which so baffle us when we are sitting in front of the little people. You at once perceive the ingenious method by which the hero pulls his sword from the scabbard and how a marionette can puff at a cigarette, real smoke coming from his mouth.

The number of properties a marionette theatre requires is amazing. Here is what Thomas Holden, the famous English manipulator, considered he needed to keep his theatre and puppets in good repair. The list is a good example of the queer needs of the marionettes. Twenty pounds of various paints; pencils and brushes; five hundred old clock and watch wheels; one hundred watch springs; seven pounds of human hair; five hundred pairs of artificial eyes in miniature; a machine for making silk stockings; two small steam engines; a boiler; a complete set of joinery tools; some hundreds of yards of wire of all thicknesses; trays, buckets, glasses, bottles and so on. The complete list occupies many pages and does not include the costumes or the stuff for making them, or the numerous limbs required.

It grows late and the final curtain has long since descended. The night watchman passes and eyes me suspiciously. And still the little people fascinate.

After you have been on the stage some time you are seized by an illusion which takes complete possession of you. The lovable little people become to you real people, and you can only think of them as such. And when at last you leave them you feel that you have come from a dream world that is more real than the everyday world.

You see human faces and somehow they seem strangely lacking in expression, and you say to yourself: "It is they who are wooden and not the marionettes I have just left." And you wonder if at night, when the theatre is empty, the little people come to life as the dolls do in the fairy story and the Russian Ballet.



[*General Photographic Agency.*

SANTORO AND HIS DAUGHTER OVERHAULING THE PUPPETS.

HOW TO KEEP FIT

A Series of Simple Exercises

By Elisabeth Partington, M.P.C. London

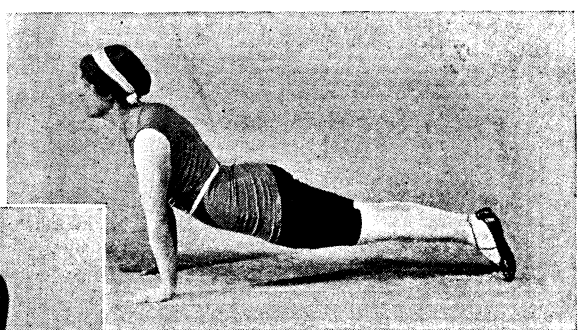
Photographs by G. Hana.

3RD SET: FOR THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

THIS month the exercises are to promote deep breathing and incidentally to improve the voice.

Charm of voice, with the power of magnetism behind it, is now being more and more cultivated.

In ordinary conversation only about four notes are used by many people. The practice of deep breathing brings a fuller and much more pleasing range of voice.





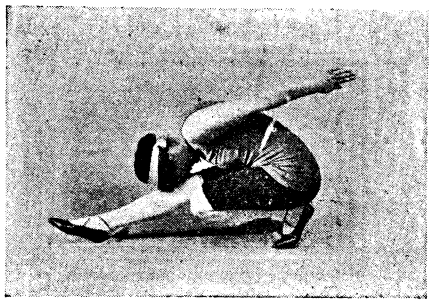
1ST EXERCISE.

From a standing position bend forward, keeping arms and legs straight, as shown in lower picture.

Begin to walk forward on the hands, the feet remaining fixed until the position in upper picture is reached.

Then grip the floor with feet and begin to walk backward to first position.

This exercise is for strengthening the arms and wrists and hardening the leg muscles.

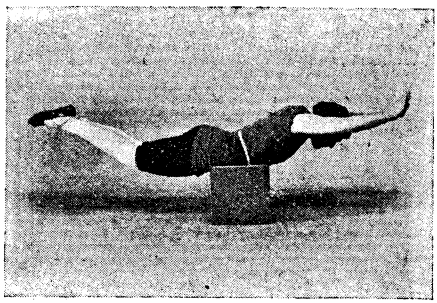


2ND EXERCISE.

Full knee bend position, with right leg stretched forward, left arm thrown behind, right arm on floor, and body bent forward, head touching the outstretched leg.

An excellent exercise for suppleness and body control.

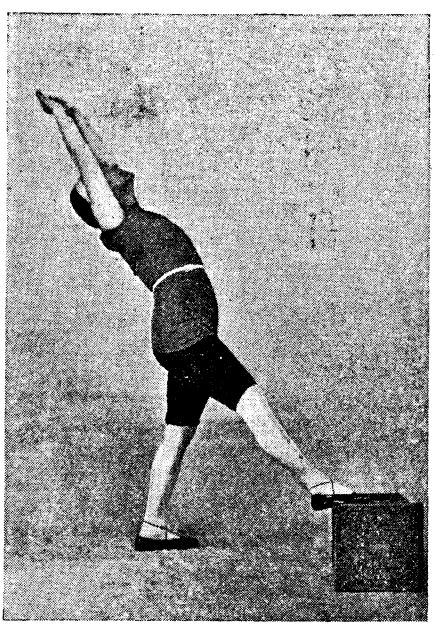
Six times to begin.

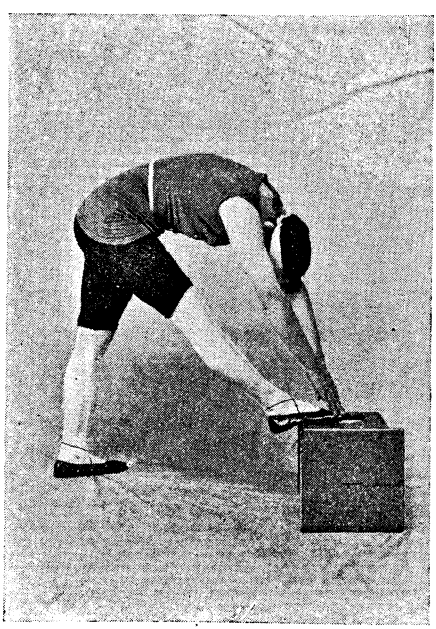


3RD EXERCISE.

Recline on a small stool as shown. Raise arms and legs at same time as high as possible.

This is a strenuous exercise if done properly. It is for strengthening the muscles of the hip, back and abdomen, also for reducing.





4TH EXERCISE.

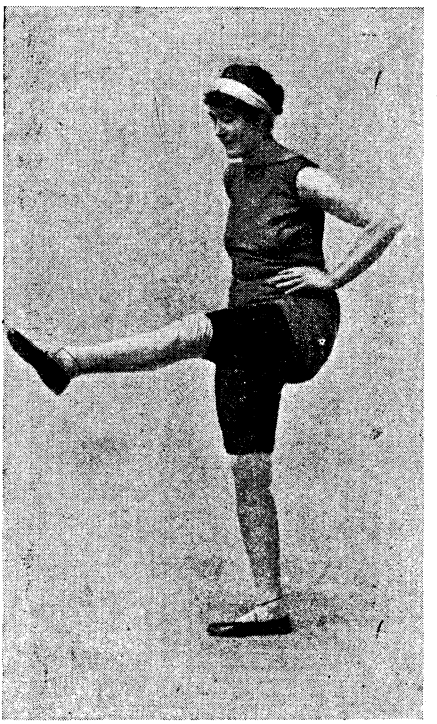
Place foot on a stool as shown, with arms raised.
Bend forward, touching the toe as in second picture, then raise arms again over head.
For strengthening the back and spine.



5TH EXERCISE.

Lay across a stool, with arms stretched upward and legs straight. Now bring arms and legs together as in illustration, then back to straight position. Repeat without letting either arms or legs touch the ground.

This exercise is for the muscles of the abdomen and for reducing weight.



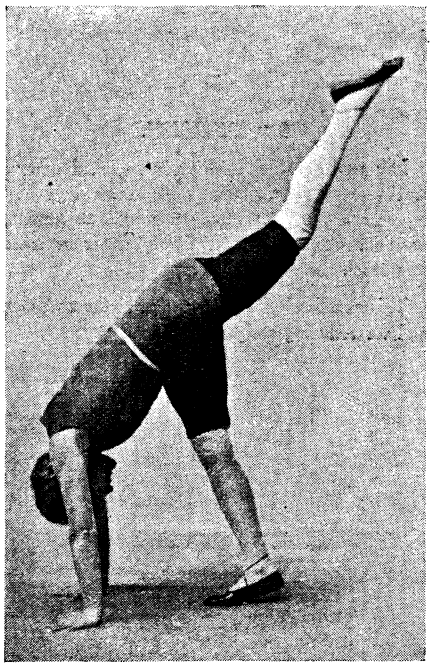


6TH EXERCISE.

With hands resting on hips, swing legs forward and backward as illustrated, without letting the leg touch the floor in the swing from front to back.

Continue six times with each leg before changing.

This exercise reduces the hips, and is excellent massage for the abdomen.



7TH EXERCISE.

Bend forward as shown in illustration to 1st Exercise, then raise alternate legs as high as possible. Must be done slowly and decidedly.

This exercise is for reducing the hips, calves, thighs and ankles, and for strengthening the arms.



9TH EXERCISE.

Raise leg on any article sufficiently high, with hands on hips. Bend far forward, resting head on raised leg, then raise upward and forward.

This is for reducing the waist and hips, and to begin should be continued twenty times with each leg.

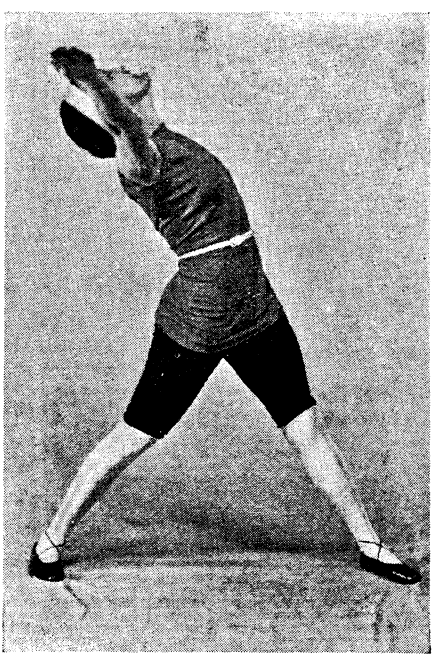


8TH EXERCISE.

Arms stretched outward to shoulder line, left leg stretched sideways as shown, right leg bent.

Change over, keeping arms in same position, to left leg bent, and right leg stretched, contracting the toes only in executing the movement.

This exercise is for reducing ankles and calf muscles and promoting control of body.



10TH EXERCISE.

Stand with feet apart and arms outstretched to shoulder level. Turn the body at the waist only to the side, and then bend backward from the waist as illustrated. Raise body upward and turn to the front.

Repeat on opposite side.

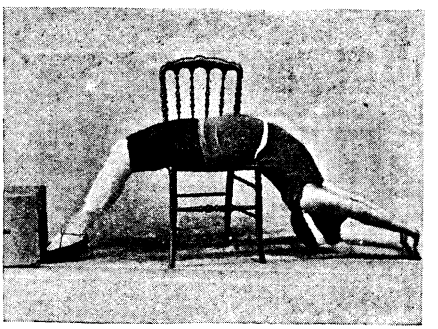
A good exercise for ankle and knee joints and for the vertebra.



11TH EXERCISE.

Stand with hands clasped behind, then bend far forward and at the same time raise the arms as high as possible.

This exercise corrects any tendency to round shoulders.

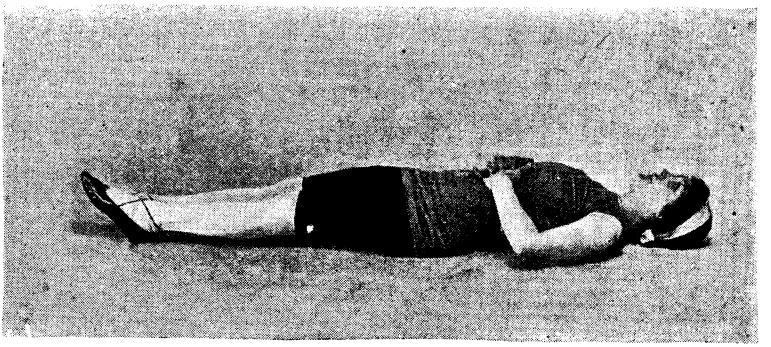


13TH EXERCISE.

Sit on a chair with arms raised upward and feet fixed so that you are able to grip.

Lower the body backwards as shown, until the hands touch the floor.

If this exercise is persisted in every day, all digestive troubles will cease.



12TH EXERCISE.

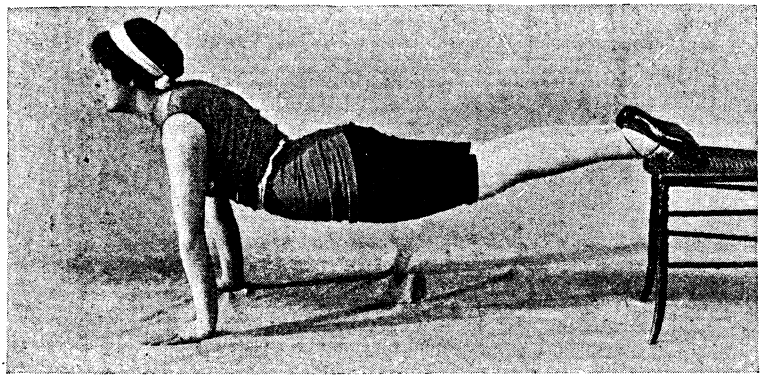
(1) Fix the feet under anything that you can grip with, such as a wardrobe or other heavy piece of furniture. Hands in front as shown, then raise and lower the body.

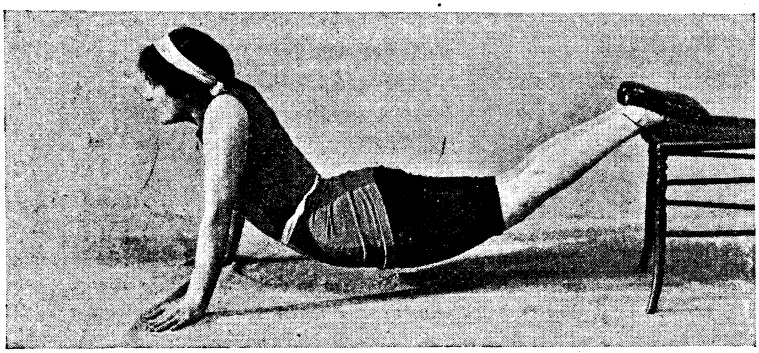
(2) Same exercise with hands behind the head, and repeat.

(3) Same exercise with feet wide apart, hands behind the head. Slowly raise and lower the body.

These movements must only be done twice each to begin; increase by one each day.

For strengthening the abdominal muscles.

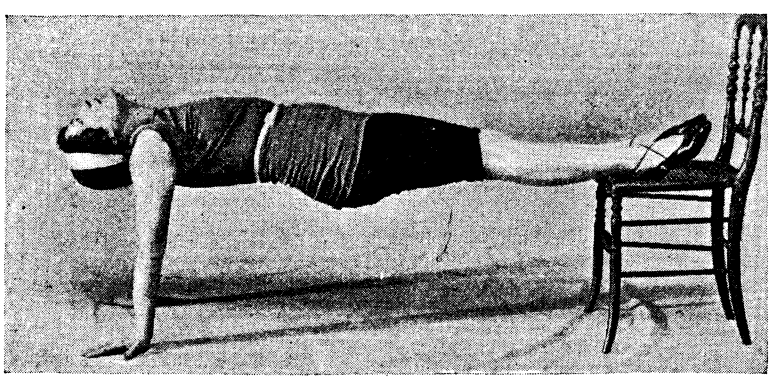




14TH EXERCISE.

Place the feet on a chair face downward as in first illustration. Lower the trunk without bending the arms as in second picture, then raise to first position.

For strengthening the waist muscles, arms and abdomen.



15TH EXERCISE.

Same exercise as No. 14, but in reversed position, face upward as illustrated.

Lower the trunk, keeping the arms straight.

This exercise is for general muscular strength.

See next Month's Number for Exercises designed to promote Vitality.

Back Numbers containing previous sets of exercises can still be obtained.

THE ROCK GARDEN

By H. C. BAILEY

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

MR. FORTUNE was lunching at that one of his clubs where they understand mayonnaise. This often happens when he is condemned to spend June in London. The defect of that club is, men speak to each other. He was therefore not surprised that big Blenkinsop stopped at his table—it only renewed his gloom. Blenkinsop had a guest in tow, a plump old fellow with white hair and owlish eyes which looked queer above a red youthful face. He was introduced as Sidney Brigg and a little flustered about it. When Mr. Fortune settled down to a cigar upstairs he found them on top of him.

Blenkinsop asked after his garden and Reggie moaned that he had not seen it for weeks. Blenkinsop laughed. "You two fellows would go well together, Fortune. Brigg is a great gardener too. Mad about it. Wonderful place down in Wessex."

Reggie's eyes opened a little. "Jolly," he sighed.

"Oh, nothing wonderful at all," said Brigg eagerly. "I—I do think I have a rather remarkable rock garden. If you care about that sort of thing, Mr. Fortune, I—I should be most happy if you'd come down to my little place."

"Thanks very much. Like to." Reggie got on his feet. "Good-bye. There's some bacteria waiting for me hungrily." He went off to his laboratory and Brigg and the rock garden faded out of his conscious mind.

Two days afterwards they came back. Reggie was at home dozing between tea and dinner and upon him dozed Darius, his black Persian cat. They woke to gaze reproachful at the parlourmaid, who offered the card of Mr. Sidney Brigg. "My only aunt," Reggie murmured. "Yes. I'll see him." And Brigg was brought in. Reggie and Darius blinked at him. "How are you?" Reggie held out a hand. "You see why I can't get up." Darius rose with cold indignation and descended to the floor.

"Too bad of me to trouble you like this, really," Brigg said, and stooped and stroked Darius, who gave answer in a contemptuous curse. "Sorry, old fellow. Yes, too bad of me." He looked up at Reggie. There was something odd about his owlish eyes: anxiety in them, or fear. Reggie's foot pushed a chair towards him. "Ah, thank you. The fact is—I'm off again to my place to-night—I just wanted to fix things up before I went—you're giving me a day or two, aren't you—what about a date, now—better come along soon—the garden is just at its best." He spoke fast and in jerks.

"My dear chap!" Reggie murmured. "Thanks very much, of course. But I've got my little problems up here."

"Your police work?" Brigg answered quickly. "Is there anything urgent?"

"Oh no. Not police. Bacteria. Much more interesting. But exacting. Gardens always are at their best when you can't be there. A sad world."

"You must give me a week-end, Mr. Fortune. You really must. It was a promise, you know. And really you'll find it most interesting. Everyone tells me my rock garden is something quite out of the way." He dilated upon it; he babbled of gentians, of anemones, of veronicas from the ends of the earth. And it became clear to Reggie that he did not know what he was talking about.

Darius had sat down in the middle of the floor: with round golden eyes he contemplated the babbling Brigg: he opened his mouth to utter a long, low wail.

Brigg jumped. "Ah, poor fellow," he said, and bent to stroke him. Darius looked

at the caressing hand, bit it, rose and went to the door and ordered it to open

"Yes. Very interesting," Reggie murmured. He gazed at Brigg, at the large, pale, haunted eyes which reverted from Darius to him. "I could get away on Friday if you'd have me."

"My dear sir, I shall be delighted." The red face puckered into a boyish smile. "Just what I hoped for." He gave elaborate directions. They must come through Broading: anyone would tell them the way to Five Thorns. He babbled on like a house-agent's advertisement. He was hard to get rid of.

When he was at last gone Reggie went slowly upstairs to his wife's room. A smile out of the looking-glass rewarded him. He sat down and contemplated her as she dressed. "My dear child," she protested. "Run away and change yourself."

"You're nice, aren't you, Joan?" he said gravely.

"Yes, I think so," said the face in the glass. She turned. "What's the matter?"

"Wanted to look at you. I'm going away this week-end."

"Pig," said Mrs. Fortune. "What for?"

"I don't know. The fellow wanted me to go and look at his rock garden. And speakin' broadly, I should say he hasn't got one." He told her about the intrusion of Brigg.

Mrs. Fortune put the last gold pin into her amber hair and turned. "What do you think he really wants?"

"Me, darling," Reggie smiled. "That's the basic fact. He wants me, and he wants me badly."

"Vanity," said Mrs. Fortune. "Why should he want you?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"He isn't being honest."

"Oh no. No. That's the interestin' complication."

"If he was really in trouble, and wanting you to help, he would have told you what it was."

"Yes. That would be the natural process. I didn't think he was quite natural, Joan. I should say he's in fear. Fear of something he can't be sure about. Kind of haunted."

"And he wants to get you down alone to this country place. There may be something horrible."

"Trouble for somebody. Yes. That is indicated."

"Oh, of course, if you think someone's in trouble, you must fuss to help. But this horrid old man may be making a trap for you."

"Yes. It could be," Reggie said slowly. "That would be his error, Joan."

"You are just a small boy," said Mrs. Fortune. "I know why you're going really. It's because Darius liked him. Horrid cat."

"The darling!" Reggie was indignant. "You have no reverence, Joan. No soul. Darius couldn't bear him. Though he worshipped most respectful. Darius don't like people jumpy. So I have to attend to Mr. Brigg."

"I hate being married to a philanthropist," said Mrs. Fortune thoughtfully.

"You aren't." Reggie was shrill. "I'm not, Joan."

Mrs. Fortune made a face at him.

Thus with domestic strife he undertook the case of the rock garden.

At this stage he regarded it with a completely open mind. He allowed an equal possibility that it might turn out to be anything from murders to indigestion. His treatment of it, he will point out, showed that caution which is his chief virtue as a man of science. Blenkinsop was sought at the club and his desultory mind turned over thoroughly. It seemed that he had no deeper purpose than his usual fatuous desire that everybody should know everybody. Old Brigg had confided to him a craving to meet the great Mr. Fortune and Blenkinsop had eagerly arranged it. He knew all about Brigg. The man belonged to an old Wessex family. His place down there had been in their hands for generations. Brigg hadn't had it long. He'd made his pile in the cotton trade before the estate came to him. He was a widower then with one daughter—very smart girl. Married again a few years ago. Lovely woman—an actress or something. Old Brigg found her down in the provinces and married her right away.

"Have you been to his country house?"

"Oh yes. Several times. Fine old place. They do you very well too. And the ladies are worth looking at. You ought to go."

"Yes, I think so," Reggie murmured.

The domestic affairs of Brigg seemed to him to offer opportunities for various complications. Superintendent Bell was asked to look into the past of Sidney Brigg, and with a mind resolutely open Reggie went down to look into his present.

The big car came to a pleasant country

of woodland and down. At the end of the afternoon they ran into the quiet little grey town of Broading, and Sam the chauffeur drew up by the dreaming policeman in the market-place to ask the way to Five Thorns. When he woke up he was zealous to oblige.



"A woman hurried round the corner of the house and stopped short."

Sam nodded and drove on. "Well, well," Reggie murmured. "Always wise to be in good standing with the police, Sam. We've got it on record we arrived here, anyway."

Sam looked round with a hint of a grin on his Cockney face. "All right, sir. I thought somebody 'ad got 'is number up."

"I wonder," Reggie murmured.

And they saw Five Thorns. Its roof rose close under the bastion of a bare hill-side, where springs broke out to make a pool, gleaming silver through the green darkness of surrounding trees.

Beyond the pool and the wood the house stood, a mass of grey stone built by some eighteenth-century Brigg whose ideal was solemn comfort. The wide lawns about it smiled in the sunshine bright with Vic-

torian gardening: geraniums, calceolaria, lobelia.

"Well, well," Reggie murmured. "Home, sweet home. That's what I did not think, Sam."

As the car drew up, a woman hurried round the corner of the house and stopped short. It was to be inferred that the sound of a car had brought her expecting someone, and Reggie was not what she expected. She was a vivid creature, if her colours were put on by nature.

From the other end of the garden came Brigg. He beamed, he gushed, he was officious, and the woman vanished.

Reggie was taken to a large much-furnished bedroom, and, relieved at last of the attentions of Brigg, who seemed to want to valet him, sat down to contemplate it. It had everything, as Brigg had laboriously pointed out, that any man could think of putting in a bedroom; its colours were a pleasant blue and grey, its air was fresh, but there was a gloom about it. The light outside was brilliant. Reggie moved to the window and looked through the sunshine to the trees about the pool and the green wall of the down. But the sunlight did not come into the room, had not come and would never come. The windows looked north.

"Keeping me on ice," Reggie murmured. "What shall be done to the man whom Brigg delights to honour? He shall be put in a room without sun. By accident or design, I wonder?" Sam tapped at the door and came in. "Hallo. Found your quarters?"

"Yes, sir. Floor above this. Looking the other way." Sam stiffened under his dreamy eyes. "Anything doing, sir?"

"Run away and make yourself at home. Be affable, Sam. We just want to know, you know."

Reggie went down to tea. The drawing-room did not look north. It was full of sunshine.

The woman who had hurried to meet his car sat with her back to the light. Brigg bustled forward. "Here's Mr. Fortune, Gladys."

"So pleased you could come." Her tone was careful and lifeless. A thin hand was limp in his. "Sidney thinks the world of his garden. I hope you'll like it. It is rather a dear place."

She did not seem to mean that or to mean anything in particular. She was without interest in him. Reggie considered her with benign curiosity. Those vivid colours, of course, were not provided by nature. Even with the light behind her she was too red and too white. But her hair might have grown that glossy black, and perhaps the darkness about them that made her eyes look so big was natural. Pity she used all that paint. A well-made face before it was made up. She had a certain originality too. She was years out of fashion. She let nature determine the length of her hair and the black mass of it was bound in a knot on her neck. Her red dress gave her a waist and amplitude above and below and fell long. "Strange survival," Reggie said to himself. "Nineteenth-century vamp."

But her conduct was insipidly, timidly respectable. She was attentive to both men, not very quick and with a touch of shyness or humility, but anxious to oblige, to agree, to have them satisfied and pleased. Brigg did his share. He kept her in the conversation and he made the most of what she said. He was an admiring and kindly husband. Yet Reggie felt that everybody was working hard.

Brigg looked at his watch. "Do you know where Dorothy is, dear?" he said.

"She went out with Mr. Howard in his car."

Brigg grunted. "She won't be in to tea now, I suppose. My daughter, you know," he explained to Reggie. "We've got a fellow staying here, friend of my wife's, with a contraption he calls a sports car. Dorothy's fond of motoring. Well, you'll see her at dinner. What about a turn in the garden now?"

"Oh yes," Reggie smiled. "I must see the famous rock garden without delay." He turned to Mrs. Brigg. "Something rather wonderful, isn't it?"

She looked at him with puzzled eyes. "I don't understand about it myself. It's —it's very curious. Sidney's awfully interested."

Brigg laughed. "That's really what brought him, Gladys." Brigg clapped him on the shoulder. "Come on, sir." Mrs. Brigg did not come.

They walked, as it seemed to Reggie, over miles of lawn studded with masterpieces of bedding out and carpet bedding. They inspected a good old orchard. They came through an expanse of model vegetables to acres of glass with all the kindly fruits of the earth out of their season.

Reggie emerged breathing like a fish. Reggie mopped a weary brow. "Wonderful place," he moaned, and gazed pathetically

at Brigg. "Did you say you had a garden somewhere?"

Brigg was not offended. He was not amused. He remained nervously earnest and anxious to please. "You mean the rock garden," he said. "Yes, of course. Yes. That's the real interest. I just wanted to show you what we can do down here. Now we must go up this way." They turned back to reach the house from another side.

Reggie glanced at him again. He seemed to suffer from excitement.

"There it is—do you see?— there."

Reggie looked where he pointed. Up the side of the house rose the rock garden.

"Well, well," Reggie murmured. "Yes. That's very remarkable." He felt Brigg watching him intently. "I never saw anything like it."

The mound of the garden was set close against the house wall—that sunless northern wall from which his bedroom windows looked out. It spread only a few yards wide at the base, but was built up, hiding the wall, to about a man's height.

"Yes. Very interesting. Did you make it yourself?"

"No, it wasn't me," said Brigg quickly. "It's been there half a century. My cousin, who had the place before me, was a great gardener."

"Was he?" Reggie murmured. He made a polite inspection of the mound. It was mostly rocks and labels, as if it had been constructed yesterday for a new house.

The plants were not only small, but sad, disliking their sunless habitation. Most of them had not been there fifty years or fifty days. "You've done a good deal to it yourself?" Reggie asked.

"Well, yes, I have taken a bit of trouble with it," said Brigg, and stopped suddenly as if he had made a blunder. "I mean to say, I got very interested in these little things, you know." He pointed out, as if they were rarities, saxifrages and sedums and anemones which every rock gardener grows. "See those asters. They come from the Alps and that rhododendron too. They're very rare. And that aquilegia, it's Siberian, you know. And the primulas just above, they grow on the Himalayas. It is interesting, isn't it?"

"Yes. Yes. It is." Reggie looked at him. The old fellow was babbling nonsense. If he got a plant's name right, he was wrong about its origin: a wild jumble of catalogue descriptions. Queer state of mind in a man who was keen about his garden. For he had stuck some rare things into that sunless mound.

Brigg laughed nervously. "Rather wanted to make something new of it, you know. Something a bit different."

"Well, you have," Reggie murmured. "Something quite out of the way." And he went over that garden plant by plant. It was not adapted to inspection, being built in the manner of a mountain. But Brigg encouraged him to clamber. His interest delighted Brigg.

When he went back to his room to dress he found Sam in waiting. "And what have you found?" He dropped into a chair.

"Nice 'omely 'ouse, sir. Very pleasant. Old servants running it, to please 'emselves, which they do you very well, and giving master and missus a first-class character. Looks all right to me."

"Does it?" said Reggie, and gazed at him with large melancholy eyes.

Sam's comic face sharpened. "Got on to something, sir?"

"Oh, my hat, no! Run away. Run away and go on talkin' to 'em."

Reggie undid his more constraining buttons and sank deep in the chair, in the dishevelled condition he prefers for deeper thought. He desired urgently to arrange the absurd facts. . . .

When he came down he found Mrs. Brigg with another man. They were apart with the ostentation of people who do not want to be caught together. She introduced him to Mr. Ormond Howard, and he found himself looking at a man not so young as he had been, but dapper, like a middle-aged hero of musical comedy. Mr. Howard talked about nothing and found himself most amusing. He was a very bright young thing.

Another one came in, but she was young: straight and angular as a boy and with a boy's swagger. It did not suit her abundance of paint and powder. She was whistling one of the commoner tunes of the moment. "Hullo, old thing"—she patted Mrs. Brigg on the head—"had a good day?" And she turned to Mr. Howard. "Give me a gasper, Ormond."

"Where have you been, Dorothy?" Mrs. Brigg's eyes had a queer anxiety.

"All round the jolly old world." She blew smoke-rings. "That's some bus Ormond's got. What did we work up to, boy? Eighty plus?"

"Go easy with it," Howard chuckled. "Only seventy. While she was on the ground."

"I wish you wouldn't," said Mrs. Brigg.

"Oh, cheerio!" Dorothy laughed.

Brigg bustled in. "Ah, you're all down." He saw Reggie contemplating life from a corner. "You've met Mr. Fortune, Dorothy?"

"Looked him over, papa," said she, and did so with amusement.

"I'm so sorry." Mrs. Brigg started up. "My stepdaughter, Mr. Fortune."

"Now I know you, what about a cocktail?" said Dorothy.

"I'm not young enough." Reggie shook his head: for he considers the cocktail one of the gravest errors of the human race.

"Poor old thing. Watch the children play." Howard drank with her and they went in to dinner.

Whatever was wrong in the house, it had not upset the cook. Her ideas were simple and classic, her results mellow. The claret was a bland and opulent Léoville. Part of Reggie's mind was diverted into a benign meditation whether a sound dinner of the second class, a dinner without imagination, is not the most soothing. The other part tried dutifully to talk to Mrs. Brigg, which was difficult. She tried, too, but she seemed to have no subjects. When he fell back on the sure and certain hope that a woman who had been on the stage would talk about that, she became dumb.

The ladies departed. Brigg praised his port, which deserved it. From a little casual talk the voice of Howard asserted itself. He seemed to be telling the story of his life. . . .

He wanted Mr. Fortune's opinion: he would like to tell Mr. Fortune about old somebody: and then there was a funny business at so and so; and so on. It became clear to Reggie that pumping operations were in progress. . . .

Howard was anxious to know whether Mr. Fortune knew anything about his past, and what he knew. It was done neatly enough. Its result was to bring over Reggie's round face a sleepier innocence, to make his conversation more vaguely irrelevant. If ever man had reason to believe that he had failed to interest another, it was Howard.

He was well satisfied. He brought his autobiography to an end and they took their cigars in to the ladies. Wireless was in full blast. Reggie sought the remotest corner: it is a form of noise which produces in him resentful melancholy. But he found it convenient then: he desired a little meditation on Mr. Howard. The man was afraid of him. Well. Always a useful start. It must be assumed that Mr. Howard knew his reputation.

It could be inferred that Mr. Howard had reasons for fearing the attention of the police. Anything more was a guess. And what could the fellow be up to? Making love to that minx of a girl? There they were together, his permanently waved head very close to her sleek one, babbling.

Brigg said he was a friend of Mrs. Brigg's. She must have brought him into the house. Perhaps he was using the girl as cover for an affair with the woman. Mrs. Brigg looked about half dead, pretending to play patience and watching them. Suppose Brigg thought the fellow was playing tricks. Good reason for kicking him out: very queer reason for bringing a medical expert down to look at him. No. Some unknown factor in the problem.

Howard and the girl started up, declared themselves tired of the wireless, ragged a little and went off to play, as they announced, billiards. Mrs. Brigg said she was tired. Brigg switched off the wireless, fussed over her and advised bed. She went. Brigg stared at Reggie. His owlish eyes had a queer intensity. It seemed to Reggie that he was ready to bring his trouble out. "Care for a game?" he said. Reggie shook his head. "All right. Come and smoke a pipe in the library."

It was a sombre room, though Brigg put on a lot of lights. Books covered the walls except for the fireplace and one dark curtained window. The furniture was Victorian and ungainly, but there were chairs of comfort. An ugly room. Reggie wondered why it was all wrong, looked about him and discovered that the plan was bad. It was too big for one window, and the one was in a corner. "Whisky and soda?" said Brigg.

"Just soda, thanks," Reggie murmured. Brigg made a mess of it. Brigg talked a lot of muddled apology about that and stopped suddenly and sat down and stared at Reggie. He seemed to be waiting for something to happen.

Reggie's placid nerves stood to attention. He cocked a leg over the arm of his chair and turned in it so that he could see both curtained door and curtained window. And to explain his inspection of the ugly room

he murmured that Brigg had some jolly old books. It took Brigg some time to make an answer to that startling remark. Then he said he didn't know, he supposed there were some good things; he wasn't much of a judge; they weren't really his; his cousin had made the library; and in spasms he gave a catalogue.

His pale owlish eyes turned from Reggie to the books in the corner far from the window.

Reggie looked that way too. The shelves stood solid from floor to ceiling, built into the wall, full of books. "Something special there?" he said sharply.

"Nothing at all. It's Darwin and Huxley—that sort of thing—my cousin rather went in for science. All that corner is science." But Brigg's eyes were frightened.

"The scientific department. I see. Do you use it much?"

Brigg did not seem to hear. "I say, Fortune—do you find the room rather dark?" he asked in a low voice.

"No. No. Plenty of light. Just comfortable."

"Oh, very well—if you're comfortable." The voice sank to a whisper. Then Reggie could hear his breathing. "Fortune—what was that?" he gasped.

"I don't notice anything." Reggie's eyes searched the room, saw no movement in the dark curtains, no change anywhere.

"You don't hear it?" Brigg whispered.

And Reggie heard no sound but the man's uneasy breath. "I only hear you," he said, and waited, watching Brigg's face. It was pale and drawn. "What do you hear?"

"The tapping," Brigg whispered. "There!" He pointed with an unsteady finger to the books in the corner.

"In the scientific department?" Reggie came out of his chair with one quick, silent action. "No, I hear nothing, Brigg." He went to the corner, put an arm into the shelves and felt them and the wall behind. All was solid.

"Can't you hear anything really?" Brigg muttered.

"I can't. No," said Reggie gently. "What's it like, Brigg?"

"Just tap, tap, tap. Listen, Fortune. It gets louder. Ah!"

"And what was that?"

"You did hear! Like a cry, isn't it? That always comes."

"But I didn't hear it," Reggie murmured. He went silently to the window and slipped between the curtains and looked out into the half-dark of the summer night. He saw the mound of the rock garden.

A hand clutched at him. Brigg's breath was on his face. "Did you see her?" Brigg whispered.

"No. No. Who was she?"

"I don't know. I can never see her face. It's like a white blur. Under that bonnet, you know."

"Oh. She wears a bonnet?"

"Something like that. And a cloak that's dark, and a sort of big skirt to the ground. She just glides along."

"Not like anybody you ever saw elsewhere?"

"Nobody at all."

"And she glides away after the tapping?"

"Yes, after the cry. Sometimes I've seen her standing there by the rock garden. She stays till the cry and then goes away."

"Ever been out to her?"

"I did—yes, two or three times, but she faded away into nothing. I've never got close."

"Anyone else ever seen her—or heard the tapping?"

"I'm not sure." Brigg hesitated. "I spoke about it to my wife. I brought her here one night. She said there was nothing. But I'm not sure. She wouldn't come again. I've never spoken of it to anyone else, but I know they haven't noticed anything."

"It only comes in this room, and only at night?"

"Yes, that's it."

"When did it begin to come, Brigg?"

"About a month ago I heard the tapping first."

"Any special reason why you should begin to hear things?"

"You mean it isn't real? Fortune, honestly, didn't you hear anything at all? Didn't you see anything?"

"No. No. Nothing. I'm sorry."

"It isn't real, then? Do you think I'm going mad?"

"Oh no. No, I think it's very curious and interesting."

"But if there isn't anything—if it isn't real—and I could swear I heard it and saw it——"

"What is real?" said Reggie gently. "My dear chap, I don't know. I can believe in things I don't hear and I don't see. Lots of things are curious. Same like the small boy said of Jonah and the whale."

"But you didn't feel anything?"

"I didn't say that. No. I didn't say

that. I felt rather queer. Uncomfortable and worried. Kind of depressed."

"My dear Fortune!" Brigg clung to his arm. Brigg was delighted. "That's exactly how it affects me."

"Yes." He looked at Brigg with curiosity. "I wonder why. Well, well. A little placid thought is required. Does it come again to-night?"

"Oh, not again, no. Never twice the same night," said Brigg quickly.

"Then bed is indicated. Things look different the morning after. You may as well sleep, you know. I shall be adjacent."

And even at this stage in the case he still preserved an open mind. He is emphatic about that. He went to bed, as he points out, ready for anything. He inclined to believe in the sincerity of Brigg, but he admitted a possibility that, by way of a bit of fantastic humbug, Brigg might be working up to something horrid. If Brigg was sincere, he allowed that several explanations were equally available. The old boy might have worried himself into delusions and hallucinations. Somebody who wanted to upset him might have put the idea of the tapping and the woman into his head. Either way, quite a common case. Yes. But there were other possibilities. The noise, the cry, the woman might be simply real. Not that night, but perhaps some night before. And having started seeing ghosts, he didn't stop. A living woman playing ghost? The wife, then.

"I wonder." Reggie sank deep in the chair in his bedroom. In his large experience of the abnormal he has not met a ghost. But he had seen fear take hold of Brigg if ever a man felt fear. "Yes. That's where I began," said Reggie drearily. "There is something queer about the beastly room. Feels like death."

The door opened. He sprang to his feet and faced it. "Oh, my Lord!" he laughed. "Hullo, Sam. Come in."

"Anything doing, sir?"

"I don't know. Not what you'd call a nice house for the simple mind."

"Very pleasant in the servants' 'all."

"Is that so? Good. Now you're goin' to make a night of it."

"What's up, sir?"

"You are. I'm not. I'm goin' to bed. You're goin' to stay here bright and wakeful, and if you hear anybody movin' or any noise you'll wake me. Which I hope to heaven I shall be asleep." He began to shed his clothes. "When decency permits, open the door a bit, so you'll hear any sound. See?"

"That's all right, sir. You go bye-bye. I'm on."

But nothing happened in the night.

The only person at breakfast who showed signs of lack of sleep was Mrs. Brigg. Her painted face was haggard, the rings darker beneath her eyes. She did not eat. She divided a nervous watchfulness between her husband and Howard. Howard was bright and noisy with Dorothy, and they got up together. "Are you two going off again?" said Brigg.

"He says he can get eighty out of the jolly old bus. Want to see him do it. There's a bet on, old dear." Dorothy kissed the top of his white head. "Cheerio. Be good." They departed.

And Reggie also left the table. "Shall we have a turn in the garden, Fortune?" said Brigg eagerly.

"A little later. Yes. I'm just goin' into Broading with a letter to express." He ran upstairs.

As Howard came to the garage, a camera held behind the half-open door clicked, and clicked again. He did not hear it. Reggie was whistling. When he arrived the whistling was deep in the interior and Reggie offered only his rear to inspection. "Hallo! Are you going off, sir?" Howard said.

"Just to see about some letters. After you."

"Half a momentina." Howard backed his two-seater out. "Bye-bye." As he turned, the camera looked out of Reggie's coat and took another shot.

In the post office at Broading Reggie did not send a letter; he made a trunk call. "Give me Superintendent Bell. Hullo, Bell. Fortune speaking. Morning. I'm down here with the man Brigg. Have you got anything?"

"Nothing to signify. Well known in the City and Liverpool. Lived quite open. Most respectable party. First wife died long time ago. Pneumonia after operation. That sounds all right."

"Yes. I think so. What about number two?"

"She was an actress, second class. Leading lady provincial companies. Acted as Mavis Lloyd — maiden name. Nothing known against her. She was a widow. Been married to a chap called Bertram. Algy Bertram. Didn't live with him long. He was a bad egg."

"Actor, too?"

" 'M, yes. He'd call himself an actor in the police court. Professional handsome man. In the blackmailing way."

" I see. Nice husband to have about. Are you sure he's dead ? "

The telephone buzzed and crackled. " That's all right, sir," said Bell's voice. " You can take it he's dead."

" Well, well," Reggie murmured, and gazed at the telephone receiver with curiosity.

" I didn't get that, sir."

" All right. Get this. I'm sendin' up a roll of films by train. Meet it at Paddington two-five. It contains three snapshots of a man passing as Ormond Howard. See if any of your fellows know his pretty face."

" Paddington two-five. Ormond Howard. Yes, sir. What's his line ? "

" He's here as a friend of Mrs. Brigg's. He's nervous of the police. He says he was an actor. Same like the late Algy Bertram."

Again the telephone buzzed. " I'll look into it myself, sir," said Bell. " What's the address ? Five Thorns, Broading. I've got it. Good-bye."

" Oh, good-bye," Reggie murmured. He contemplated the receiver. " A little coy, my Bell. I wonder."

He drove his car back to the house. Brigg was sitting with his wife on a shady lawn, reading the paper and telling her all about it. She seemed to be asleep. The thin painted face in its relaxation looked miserably old.

Reggie did not disturb them. He inspected with minute care the rock garden and the wall beside the rock garden. He went into the library and gave equal care to the shelves and books within. When he came out Brigg hurried to meet him. " Well, here we are again." Reggie smiled. " That wall seems to be all honest to God."

" Did you suspect it wasn't ? "

" No. I suspected it was. But one ought to try everything."

" Yes, of course. You said you were going to think it over, Fortune. Can you see any explanation ? "

" Nothing certain, no. Number of possibilities." He gazed at Brigg with dreamy eyes. " We'd better talk 'em over."

" By all means. It's just what I should like. But I don't want to talk about it before my wife. Let's go for a stroll. I don't want her to be worried, you know." They went, and Mrs. Brigg sat up and watched them go. Then she hurried into the house.

" Well, well," said Reggie, and lit a cigar. " You said you didn't know any special reason why you should begin to hear things ? "

" You mean it's all a delusion. There's something wrong with my health. But I was feeling perfectly well. I am now." The owlish eyes stared at Reggie with innocent alarm. " Honestly, Fortune, I can't be going out of my mind ? "

" Oh no. No. I wasn't thinking about health. I mean, had anything happened, or anything new come into your life ? "

" No, really. There hasn't been anything at all." The old fellow looked like a bewildered boy.

" Well, take it another way. When you first heard things—was there any stranger in the house ? "

" No, there wasn't. We were quite by ourselves. We don't have many visitors. I'm sure we were alone. Howard had been here for a few days, but he'd gone again."

" Well, well. Thus we eliminate the possibility of tricks."

" But it can't be a trick. You didn't hear it. You didn't see it. It only comes to me."

" And Mrs. Brigg."

" I'm not sure," said Brigg uneasily. " She won't admit it. But I think she's felt something. You know you said you felt uncomfortable, Fortune."

" Yes. That is so. Feeling of trouble somewhere. And anxiety. Take another possibility. Do you know any reason to fear anything might go wrong in your affairs ? "

Brigg stood still. " What do you mean ? "

" Well, I mean sometimes a fellow's mind puts a notion of trouble into a queer sort of shape."

" But that's making it out a delusion again."

" Oh no. No. A notion that's true, though the shape's fantastic."

" You're thinking of my wife," said Brigg. " Aren't you ? "

" I'm thinking of everything. But it's a woman, you see."

" It's not my wife. The clothes, you know. They're old—last century—fifty or sixty years old."

They walked on. " Yes. That's a very interesting point," Reggie murmured.

" Of course, in a way I am a little worried about my wife," said Brigg. " She doesn't

look well, does she? I made her see the doctor. He says there's nothing at all wrong. And being anxious about her health—that can't account for this, can it?"

"No. I should say not. No. We thus eliminate Mrs. Brigg."

Brigg started and laughed uncomfortably. "Oh, I say. You have rather a heartless way of talking, Fortune."

"My dear chap!" Reggie linked arms with him. "Oh, my dear chap! I'm quite human." They had come beyond the garden to the wood which hid the pool. "Allurin' place. That light on the water, greys and greens rippling. Kind of gentle. Well, well. The problem bein' thus simplified, we return to the rock garden." He turned Brigg round and strolled back.

"What could the rock garden have to do with it?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," said Reggie. He looked sideways at Brigg. "It was you made a fuss about the rock garden."

"Oh, well," Brigg laughed nervously, "that was just to induce you to come down, Fortune. I was afraid you wouldn't take it seriously if I told you what was worrying me. I'm sorry. Too bad. I didn't know how sympathetic you are."

"My dear chap! No flowers, by request. I didn't mean your babbling about it to me. If you want to know, I never believed in the rock garden. I thought you were telling the tale. The fuss I'm thinking of is digging it all up and planting it afresh. Why?"

"Well, you see"—Brigg was embarrassed—"I suppose it sounds silly—it was the noise coming just there—as if the rock garden was haunted—I thought there might be something queer about it. I had my men take it all down and make it up again."

"Oh. And they didn't find anything queer?"

"Nothing at all."

They reached the rock garden. Reggie gazed at it with dreamy eyes. "Well, well," he murmured.

"You have some idea about it?"

"No. No. Only difficulties. Primarily, why is it? Why is it there? Quite irrational."

"Irrational!" Brigg exclaimed. "There's no reason in anything, is there?"

"Oh, my dear chap! Don't you believe that. There's got to be. There's going to be." The gong boomed out. "Oh yes. And meanwhile there's going to be lunch. Life is not wholly drear."

Mrs. Brigg was waiting for them. She had resolved to be gay. "I thought you had gone off for ever," she challenged her husband.

He tried to play up to her. "Were you afraid of that?"

"Oh, one never knows, does one, Mr. Fortune?"

"I expect you do," said Reggie.

"Don't you think he could do without me?"

"I see he couldn't," said Reggie.

"Oh, he never tried."

"Of course I tried," said Brigg. "But I found I couldn't. That's why you're here, Gladys."

"I'm sure you did very well without me."

"That was before I knew you existed."

"Thank you. Have you been telling Mr. Fortune all about it?"

Brigg was embarrassed. "The story of his life?" said Reggie quickly. "Oh no, no. He's been quite nice and interestin', Mrs. Brigg. Talkin' gardens."

"The rock garden?"

"Yes. The rocks come in. Rock garden people are always a bit assertive." He contrived to lead Brigg into some mild chaff that made easier conversation, but Mrs. Brigg fell out of it. Brigg tried to bring her in again by a question where the young folks had gone to.

"I don't know. I don't suppose Dorothy knows herself."

"Oh, well, I expect Howard does," Brigg laughed. "He knows most things."

His wife looked up quickly. "Do you want him?"

"Oh no, I don't want him. He's no gardener, Fortune."

"No, I suppose not," Reggie murmured. And Mrs. Brigg left them. She seemed to Reggie's taste abrupt. He lit a large cigar and wandered out and sank into a chair on the lawn, from which he contemplated dreamily the rock garden.

"What have you got in your mind?" said Brigg.

"The primary problem," Reggie mumbled. "What is the reason for its existence? And why does it exist there? Climbin' up the wall—which is unusual—and up a north wall—which is absurd."

"You mean it doesn't get enough sun?"

"It can't get any. Look at the plants. They don't understand it at all; they droop: same like me."

"Rapley told me they'd never do any good."

"Did he, though? And who is the intelligent Rapley?"

"The head gardener. He's been here a long time. He said I should never make anything of it. He couldn't think why the squire had it made. That's my cousin. The old fellows always call him the squire."

"Well, well. And you can't think either?" Reggie turned to look at him.

"I never thought about it. But I can't, of course. I hardly knew him. He was a much older man than I. My father's first cousin. I was in business, and he lived all his time down here. I only came to the place once or twice. He didn't care about visitors."

"Well, well," Reggie murmured. "Minds innocent and quiet take this for an hermitage. I wonder."

Brigg was ruffled. "There's nothing unusual in a widower with no children liking to shut himself up alone."

"Oh. He was a widower."

"Certainly. I never saw his wife. She died when I was a boy."

"After which he built his rock garden in an impossible position where a Victorian woman comes and cries to you of nights. I wonder."

"You mean it was something he did makes the place haunted."

"I didn't say that. No." Reggie looked at him with half-closed eyes. "There may be other factors, Brigg. But why did he make the rock garden by that room? And why has the room only got one window?"

"Good heavens, how should I know?" Brigg cried. "The house is built like that."

"It is. But it wasn't. That room was designed for two windows, and the other one used to be where the rock garden is: where you hear the tapping. Why was that window built up?"

"Built up? That's all guess-work, Fortune. There's nothing to show. How can you tell?"

Reggie smiled. "I looked. I'm rather careful, you know, Brigg. Not ingenious, but careful." He stood up. "So I think I'll talk to the intelligent Rapley."

But of that he made nothing. Rapley was found at tea in his cottage by the pool, and talked freely. When reduced to facts, what he said was only that the rock garden was there when he came and the old squire liked to be left alone.

"The intelligent Rapley thus failin' us," said Reggie, "is there anyone who was here when the thing was made?"

"He's the oldest servant on the place. And if it was made before his time it must be fifty years old—as much more as you like."

"Yes; say fifty plus. I should say the ghostly clothes you describe belong to the seventies. That would fit."

"Good heavens, Fortune. You don't believe the woman I see is buried there?"

"No. No evidence." Reggie looked at him with dreamy eyes. "But when did the wife die?" Brigg couldn't tell the date. It must have been more than fifty years back. "Any evidence in his papers?" said Reggie sharply. Brigg couldn't remember—he left very few—nothing personal—there might be a note of her death in the family Bible.

They went into the library. Even at the end of a summer day it was gloomy and chill there. Brigg brought out a big seventeenth-century Bible. Some pages at the beginning were covered with writing in dog-Latin. It went back two hundred years and more. Secundum morem majorum—according to the custom of his ancestors some Brigg of Queen Anne's time wrote about his family in that sacred book with his own hand. Reggie turned the pages. Carolus Brigg natus erat apud Quinque Rubos 15 mo die Aprilis A.D. 1840. "Charles Brigg born at Five Thorns 1840—that's the hermit squire? Yes." In ecclesiam Sanctissimae Trinitatis apud Sarum uxorem duxit Annam Sophiam Moreton 20 mo die Octobris A.D. 1870. "Married Ann Sophia Moreton Holy Trinity Church Salisbury 1870. And then—just another date, 11 mo die Julii 1874."

"That must be when she died," said Brigg.

"It could be. Yes. He doesn't say so. When other people died, he put mortem obiit or ob.—but not for her."

"I suppose he couldn't bear to write it, poor old man. Don't you see, it's just as I thought. She died in 1874. I was ten."

"Yes. He put 1874. And some time in the seventies he built up his library window with a rock garden. And in 1929 you see a woman wearin' the clothes of the seventies and she cries to you. I wonder."

"You're not suggesting foul play?"

"No. No. But I'd like to know what happened at that window in 1874."

Brigg thrust his hand through his hair. "Fortune, don't you see it's all fancy? You don't believe in ghosts haunting the

scene of crime. You're a scientific man."

"Yes. I am scientific," said Reggie sharply. "I believe in evidence."

"But if there was crime, why should the ghost only be seen by me—and why have I never seen it till lately? I've been here years. I've not done anything. You can't get an explanation by looking for crime."

"I'm not. I'm looking for the truth," said Reggie. "My dear chap, we'd better have it, even if it hurts."

"I see that," Brigg said uneasily. "If we could. The mystery is horrible. Fortune—you won't say anything about this to my wife?"

"My dear chap! Oh, my dear chap!" Reggie murmured.

But that evening was otherwise uncomfortable. At tea Mrs. Brigg's resolution to be cheery failed. Whether she was frightened of her husband's consultations or disturbed by the prolonged absence of Dorothy with Howard, Reggie could not decide. She gave signs of nervous strain. He fled to dress for dinner early.

Sam was in his room. "Made up your sleep?" said Reggie.

"That's all right, sir. Wanting me again to-night?"

"Yes. I think so. Got anything to tell me?"

"Don't know as I 'ave," Sam considered. "All very 'omely and friendly. I did 'ear master and missis 'ave separate rooms."

"Yes. Yes. That might be relevant. What's the servants' hall think of Mr. Howard?"

"Just a bit sniffy. Quite nice about it, but can't think what she can see in 'im, don't you know."

"Meaning Mrs. Brigg—or Miss Brigg?"

Sam winked. "Either," said he.

When Reggie went downstairs he found a state of agitation. Howard and Dorothy had not returned. Brigg was arguing to his wife that there was nothing to worry about, being himself visibly worried. She did not answer; she let him go on telling her over again that they had not noticed the time and they had had trouble with the car. She sat looking at the ground and her fingers plucked at her dress and twitched. . . . An hour late, they went to a dreary dinner, which only Reggie ate. . . . After that, Brigg supposed he had better see if he could get any news of them. He looked at Reggie pathetically and Reggie went with him to the telephone. "Get the police headquarters," Reggie said softly. "Tell 'em——"

Mrs. Brigg came up behind them. "What are you going to do?" she cried.

"Describe the car and ask if it has been seen on the road," said Reggie. "That's all."

"Yes, that's all, my dear," said Brigg anxiously. "You see, they may have had an accident."

"An accident!" she said. "Oh no!"

But while he was asking, the car came. Dorothy ran into the hall. "Hallo, old things. Most awfully sorry. Beastly bus. Beastly day. Been right off the map." She went straight upstairs.

Brigg disentangled himself from the telephone. "Dorothy, what's been the matter?"

"Bus wouldn't go. I'm all right. Bye-bye. I've had dinner. Dead to the world, that's all. Cheerio, old dear." She vanished.

Howard came in, more than ever the bright young thing. "Hallo, hallo, hallo. Anxious parents and what not. Frightfully sorry and all that. Engine trouble, don't you know. The jolly old carburettor wouldn't function. Had to dine the fair lady out in the wilds. Sorry you have been trrrroubled—what?"

Mrs. Brigg was staring at him.

"I wish you wouldn't do this sort of thing, you know," said Brigg.

"Absolutely. Abso-altogether lutely. Not my idea at all." Howard laughed. "But here we are, here we are, here we are." He yawned. "The fair lady is right, methinks. The downy couch for mine." He tripped upstairs. "Nighty, nighty."

"Ah, well. That's all right, anyway," said Brigg. "You look tired, Gladys. Better go to bed too."

"Are you coming?" She looked at him strangely.

"I shan't be long. Good night, dear." She hurried away. Brigg turned to Reggie. "Do you care to try this again?"

"Do you feel like it?" Reggie was surprised.

"Yes, I do. It's curious. I rather want to." They went into the gloomy room. "As if I ought to come, you know," said Brigg.

"I see. Yes," Reggie said gravely. He made trivial talk. . . . Slowly a sense of discomfort came over him. He watched Brigg's attention wander. "You hear it again?"

"She's tapping. Don't you hear?" Brigg whispered.

"Not me. No." Reggie shook his head.

"Ah! The cry!" Brigg muttered, and Reggie started up. "You heard it?"

"Yes. I heard that," Reggie said. Brigg ran to the window and peered through the curtains. Reggie went to the door and opened it silently a little. Upstairs there was a creak of movement. A door closed.

Brigg came out of the window curtains. "I saw her again, Fortune," he said. "She seemed to hold out her hands. She's gone. Just as she always goes—faded into nothing." He gave a little miserable laugh. "Oh, well. I'm a fool, I suppose. I felt as if there would be something more to-night. But it's just the same." He sat down heavily. Reggie mixed him a mild whisky and soda. He seemed to want it. And they went to bed. Of that also Brigg was in need.

Reggie found Sam on the alert. "Did you hear anything downstairs, sir?"

Reggie nodded.

"That was Mrs. Brigg. She went to Howard's room—bit of talk—like muttering—then that sort of cry."

"Has she come out again?"

"Oh yes, some time ago. Went back to her own room. All quiet since."

"I wonder," Reggie murmured. Slowly and fumbling, he lit a pipe, then switched off the light and set the door ajar and settled down in a chair. . . . The house had long been quiet when another door was opened. A patter of quick footsteps went along the corridor, came back, passed downstairs. The hall door was opened and closed.

Reggie climbed out of the window, hung by his hands and dropped to the ground by the rock garden and Sam followed him. He moved silently round the house. The lawns glistened dim in the half-dark of the summer night and across the lawns a woman ran and vanished. "It was 'er," Sam muttered. "Making for the road, ain't she? Wot's the game?"

But Reggie did not make for the road. He ran through the garden to the gloom of the wood. He saw Mrs. Brigg pass into it, saw her again on the verge of the pool—a vague shape, poised. And then there was a faint moaning cry on the air. It came, not from her, but from the garden. "My oath!" Sam gasped. "Wot's that now?" She heard it too. She turned from the pool, started away, stumbled and fell.

Reggie ran on. "About here," he panted. Her face showed white on the black water.

"I see. You lemme get her, sir." Sam pushed him away and waded in. Her body was lifted limp to the bank. "Queer start," Sam muttered. "Tried to drown herself all right. But she can't be dead so quick."

Reggie's hands worked upon her. "Not dead. No. Fainting. She's done something to her ankle. When that cry startled her. Fracture, I think. The pain's knocked her out. Or the shock."

"Queer, ain't it, sir? She was just chuckin' herself in and that cry stopped her like."

"I know. She was stopped. Praise God. Well, well. Now we carry on. There's a cottage somewhere here. Gardener's cottage. Go and knock 'em up. Say Mrs. Brigg went out for a stroll and she's broken her ankle—can't move her to the house—want a bed for her. Come back with a hurdle or a gate."

So Rapley and his wife were roused and in their cottage Mrs. Brigg was put to bed. As consciousness came back to her came pain and wild fear. She knew no one or did not dare to know. She stared and moaned and asked mad questions and screamed and laughed. Sam was sent off to take his car into Broading for narcotics and a nurse, and Reggie banished Mrs. Rapley and kept watch while dawn broke upon delirium. . . .

He was back in his room wondering drearily whether he could sleep an hour if he lay down. An agitated knocking introduced Brigg. "Fortune! My wife's gone!"

"Oh no. No. She went out walking in the dark last night. I saw her cross the garden. She had a fall. I found her and took her to Rapley's cottage. She's in bed there. I'm afraid her ankle's broken. It'll be all right, but she's had a lot of pain. I've got her to sleep now. There's a nurse with her."

"She went out in the night?" Brigg gasped. "Why?"

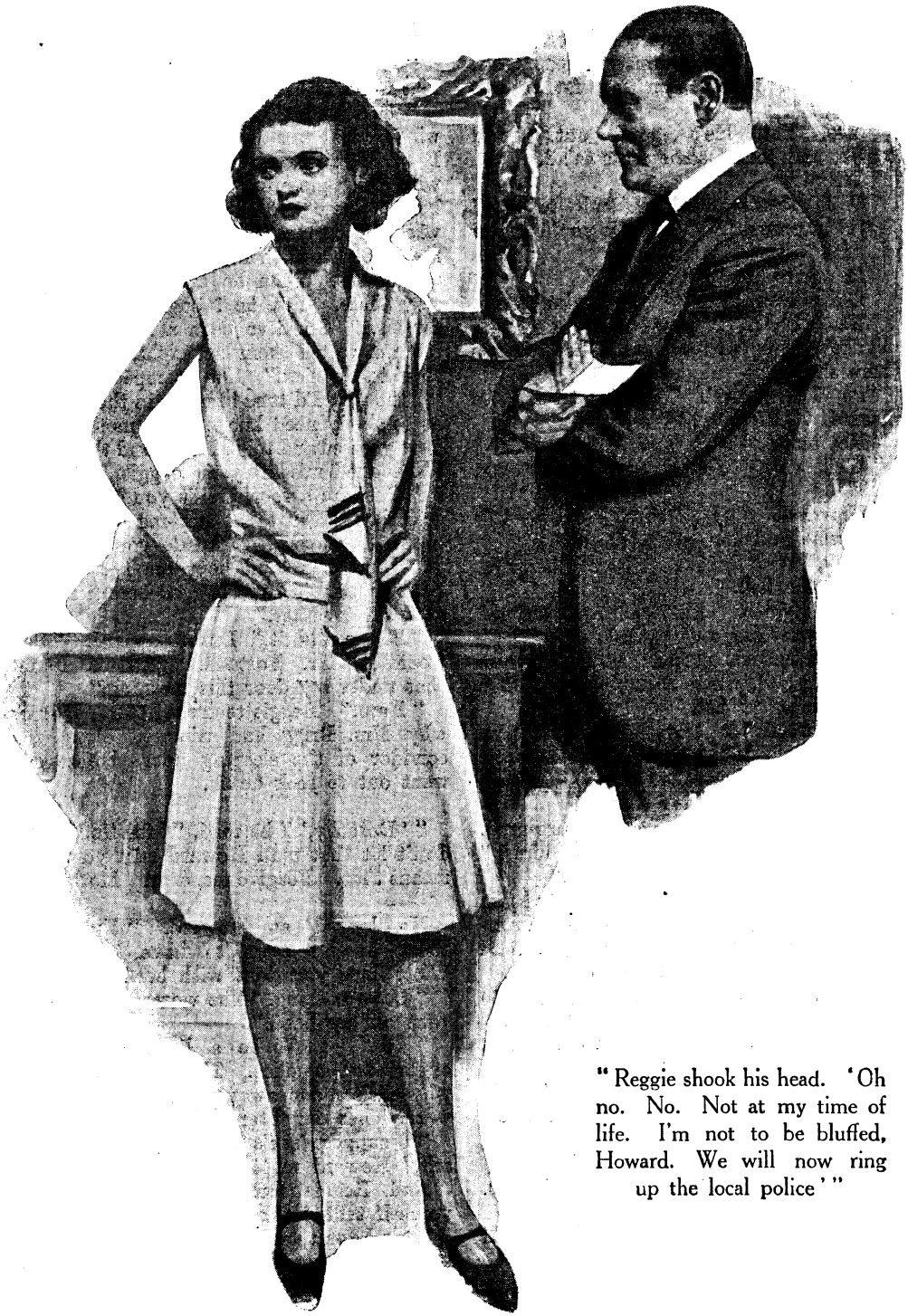
Reggie contemplated him for a moment. "Well, I should say she's been haunted too," he said.

"Can I see her?"

"Oh yes. Yes. You can't talk to her. She'll sleep for a bit yet. When she wakes—well, just be nice about it." Brigg stared at him and hurried away.

Then Reggie took his time about dressing. When he came down he found Dorothy





"Reggie shook his head. 'Oh no. No. Not at my time of life. I'm not to be bluffed, Howard. We will now ring up the local police'"

and Howard at breakfast. They displayed signs of tension. His portentous solemnity treated their existence as negligible. Silence prevailed while he drank his coffee and ate his egg. Then Dorothy cried, "Mr. Fortune, have you seen my father this morning?"

"Yes. Yes. He's gone out," said Reggie, and found some fruit salad.

"Why?"

"Well, that's rather difficult to say," Reggie murmured. "I think you'd better ask him."

"Is my mother with him?"

"Did you want her?" Reggie looked up.

"Yes. I do. I want to speak to her, and she's not in her room and nobody knows where she is."

"So I've heard." Reggie turned to Howard. "No ideas?"

"Not an earthly," Howard grinned.

"Well, well. We'd better talk it over, then."

"Charmed. Any old time." Howard lit a cigarette and lounged to the door.

"Now," said Reggie. "In the library." He rang the bell.

"Oh, right-o. Half a momentina." Howard went out and upstairs.

"My chauffeur, please," said Reggie to the butler, and, when Sam appeared, took him out into the hall.

"Mr. Fortune!" Dorothy followed them. "I want to speak to you." Sam slid away. "You think that man had something to do with my mother running away?"

"Yes. It could be," Reggie murmured.

"And you want to get it out of him?"

"Yes, that was rather the idea."

"Then I can help you. Let me tell you about yesterday." Howard came downstairs with an envelope in his hand. She turned and led the way into the library.

"Hallo, hallo. Little lady going to assist?" Howard put up his eyebrows.

"Yes, I am. I'm going to tell Mr. Fortune——"

"One moment. One moment," said Reggie. "Howard, I suppose you know who I am?"

"Some sort of doctor, what?"

"Yes. Often consulted in criminal cases. That's where I come in."

"I don't get you, old bean," Howard yawned.

"Late last night Mrs. Brigg had an angry conversation with you. This morning she's disappeared. The police will want to know what you've done with her."

"Me? I've done nothing with the woman. If she's gone, I suppose she's bolted."

"Why?" said Reggie sharply.

"Great Jimmy! Why do women bolt? Fed up, another man, or what not."

"That's a lie," Dorothy cried. "I know why mother was angry with him, of course. It was because she saw he was playing tricks with me. He was. Mr. Fortune, I don't believe there was anything wrong with his wretched car yesterday. He faked it to get me stranded with him at that inn out on the downs. Then he proposed we should stay there. Yes, he thought I should fall for that. Oh, I've been a fool. I was a fool not to tell them last night. But I was so sick, so sick." She stamped her foot. "I thought I'd turn him out in the morning and nobody need know. But mother must have guessed and told him off, and then——" She looked miserably at Reggie.

"You are a fool, aren't you?" Howard snarled. "You think step-ma didn't want me to have you? Why do you think she asked me here and kept me here? You little fool, she'd have hugged herself if we'd gone off together."

"She wouldn't," Dorothy cried. "She wouldn't, Mr. Fortune. Look. I found that under my door this morning."

"I see." Reggie took the letter. He saw why Mrs. Brigg had pattered along the corridor of the sleeping house before she went out to seek death.

"'Dorothy,'" he read, "'for God's sake don't let that man Howard ruin you. He means that. Forgive me, dear. Mother.'"

He looked at Howard. "Yes. Mrs. Brigg doesn't seem to have liked you. What have you done with her?"

"Done nothing. The woman must have gone off her head."

"Yes. That'll be a little difficult to explain to the police. They'll want to know why she's made away with just when she warned her daughter against you."

"I suppose she's made away with herself," Howard muttered.

And Reggie laughed. "Do you hear yourself telling that to a jury?"

"No, I don't, laddie." Howard started up. "Because it won't ever get to a jury. It won't get to the police. I know too much. See? You mind your step."

Reggie shook his head. "Oh no. No. Not at my time of life. I'm not to be

bluffed, Howard. We will now ring up the local police and Scotland Yard." He rose leisurely.

"Bluff my foot. You bring the police on to me and you'll make old Brigg hang himself. The woman wasn't his wife."

"No, thank you." Reggie moved away. "Nothing doing."

"You fool, look at that," Howard cried, and thrust upon him a photograph of a group. Beneath was printed:

THE GAY GIRL NUMBER ONE COMPANY, BLACKPOOL, 1926,

and the names of the people.

There was a tap at the door and the butler came with a card for Reggie. He picked it up and waved the man away. He looked at the photograph. He looked at Howard and he gave Howard the card. "Well?" he said.

Howard tossed the card down and came up to him and pointed to the photograph. "See the date?" he said. "1926. When did Gladys Bertram marry Brigg? 1925. See that chap in the front row, Algy Bertram? That's her husband. He was alive in 1926. He's alive now. Want to put the police on to me, laddie?"

"So that was it," Reggie murmured. "I see." He sat down again and pored over the photograph. "Thanks very much." He smiled at Howard. "That's the bit of evidence I wanted. Makes a nice case now. Quite a good fake, isn't it? Miss Brigg, would you mind? Just ask Superintendent Bell to come in here?" She ran out and Howard made a dash for the window and was gone. Reggie strolled to the window and with mild amusement watched him run. He made for the garage.

"Morning, sir." Bell marched in. Where is this Mr. Howard? Lady said he was with you."

"One moment. One moment. So you did recognise the snapshots?"

"That's right, sir. Much obliged. We know him. But we don't call him Howard."

"No, I dare say not. No. And what do you want him for?"

"Bit o' blackmail. Money under false pretences. Several little things. Where is he?"

"Just a moment. About the man Bertram. You were a little coy, Bell. Are you sure Bertram is dead?"

"Absolutely. We know all about it."

"Date, please. Place. And cause of death."

"I see." Bell nodded. "Your Mr. Howard's been playing tricks about that. Algy Bertram got killed 1922, by a chap he was trying to blackmail. It was kept quiet. Nice and quiet. We don't want any talk now."

"Oh no. No." Reggie smiled. "That was rather my idea."

"We'll manage that all right. Now, sir, where have you got this fellow Howard?"

"I haven't got him. He's gone. In his little car."

"What, sir? And you've kept me talking here? That's too bad, Mr. Fortune! I didn't think it of you."

"Oh, my Bell!" Reggie took his arm and walked him out. "My Bell! No harsh words. I was only bein' careful. As you want him for his own sweet sake, you shall have him. All arranged, quite nice." They came to the door where Bell's car stood throbbing and Sam conferred with the chauffeur. "Sam, how is Mr. Howard's car feeling?"

"That's all right, sir," Sam grinned. "The Superintendent will pick 'im up between here and Broading. That car won't get up a 'ill to-day. Nice drop of water in the petrol."

Bell jumped into his own car and was driven away.

"And that's that," Reggie murmured. "Now you can go to bed, Sam." He wandered back into the library. He looked about that gloomy room with dreamy eyes. "I wonder," he sighed.

Dorothy stood before him. "Mr. Fortune," she said in a low voice, "what does it all mean? Where is mother?"

"She's in the gardener's cottage. She broke her ankle last night, wanderin' out in the dark."

"In the dark?"

"Yes. Yes. You've all been rather in the dark, haven't you?"

"That man!" She shuddered. "He must have driven her mad."

Brigg came in. "Fortune! She's been talking to me. She's so strange!"

Dorothy ran to him and kissed him. "Oh, my dear!"

"Is she?" said Reggie. "What did she say?"

"She kept saying, 'I'm not your wife, I'm not your wife.'"

"And what did you say?"

Brigg was embarrassed. "Me? Oh, I said, 'Well, I'm your husband, anyway.'"

"Yes. Quite a good answer," Reggie said gently.

"But what did she mean? What's possessed her?"

"She's been tortured. That's all," said Reggie, and told him the story. "You see? The amiable Howard got in here by pretending her first husband was alive when she married you. No doubt threatened to get her prosecuted for bigamy if she didn't give him a good time. What he hoped was to get hold of your daughter."

"Oh, I hate myself," Dorothy cried.

"When she saw he meant that, your wife got more and more frightened. She wouldn't have that, whatever happened to her. She had a row with him last night about it. The crisis. She left a letter for Dorothy, telling her to have nothing to do with Howard, and ran away. And then something stopped her." Reggie looked round the ugly room. "She fell and I found her."

"Poor girl, poor girl," Brigg muttered.

"Father! She asked me to forgive her," Dorothy said. "Oh, poor mother!"

"Fortune, will she be all right now?" Brigg said.

Reggie looked at them. "Yes, I think so." He smiled and went out.

THAT night when they came back from Mrs. Brigg's bedside Reggie took him into the library again. But the flow of his talk about his wife was not checked. Reggie watched him curiously. He seemed to have forgotten that anything strange had happened to him in that gloomy room. When they were going upstairs, "So you heard nothing to-night?" Reggie smiled.

"No. Bless my soul, no. I hadn't thought of it," Brigg beamed. "I suppose I shan't now. It must have been her trouble somehow affecting me. Poor girl. Thank Heaven it's all clear now. Good night, Fortune. God bless you." He wrung Reggie's hand.

Reggie turned into his own room. "Clear? Oh, my hat!" he moaned.

It was two nights afterwards that he took Brigg into the library once more. And again Brigg was fluent upon the healing of a broken ankle and the recovery of wives from nervous shock. "Yes. She's doing very nice," Reggie murmured. "Don't hear anything now, Brigg?"

"Now? Of course not," Brigg laughed. "That's all over."

"Yes, I think so," Reggie murmured. "Her job's done, poor soul."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I've been looking into it, you know. I like to finish a case. I've found your cousin's builder. Fellow that built up that window. At least his father did. This old boy's retired, livin' at Stourmouth. His evidence is, the late cousin had a row with his wife, cause unknown. She went away. Somewhere in the seventies cousin ordered that window to be built up. The builder heard talk, the wife came back one night and tapped at the window and your cousin wouldn't let her in. So he didn't like looking at the window after, and he blocked it up and hid the place with the rock garden. Nobody ever saw her again till you saw her."

"You mean it was her ghost?"

"Do I? I don't know what a ghost is. Somebody, something not in our world, saw another Brigg and his wife getting into trouble in this place, same like they did. And tried to save you. Perhaps your mind was set free to see and hear what your cousin did. Perhaps——"

"Fifty years ago!"

"Yes. What is time? I don't know. Perhaps something, somebody, was able to bring her soul back here to help you."

"But it didn't help. It only puzzled me."

"You think so? It made you bring me down. It stopped your wife that night."

"Oh, well," said Brigg. "This is all fancy, isn't it?"

"No. No. I shouldn't say that. I always believe evidence," said Reggie.

SONG FOR A HEART.

HOW long it takes a flower to grow,
And one step to crush it.
How many breaths to make a song,
And one breath to hush it.

A heart is like a flower,
A heart is like a song,
To wake it takes a little while,
To break it, not long.

CHARLOTTE ARTHUR.

THE PRICE OF ADMISSION

By LEONARD DENZELL

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

THE crowd of sightseers had passed on. From the next room the guide's voice, habitual and perfunctory, made itself heard. "On the left you will see the celebrated portrait of the Lady Anne seated by Reynolds. . . ."

"Much virtue in a comma," reflected Paul Conroy, tossing away his hat and taking a seat.

Steyning Court really was a show-place. It was a gem, well worth the half-crown it had cost him to get in; and half-crowns meant a good deal to Paul Conroy. Through the windows he looked on completely perfect turf, on close-grown, ancient topiary work; a sundial that—surely—marked forgotten hours. . . .

Within, to feed his sensuous soul, were pieces of Ming—the black and green that he loved—a pair of buhl cabinets; a small, perfect Peter de Hooge. . . . Heavens! if only he could sit and soak it in; if he hadn't been pressed for time. He pulled out his sketching block and began to draw.

Then she came in. She was slender and vivid—perhaps over-vivid—standing out against that old and mellow background like the head on a cameo. Paris and London had done their utmost with her and should have been proud. She was probably twenty-five and, possibly, had a good complexion. Heaven, or perhaps someone in Bond Street, knew that.

Paul stood up and indicated the further room.

"You'll catch them up if you hurry. They're rallying round 'Herodias, ascribed to Titian.' 'Ascribed' is good."

Barbara Stanway sized him up with her quick glance. She didn't know how he'd got there, but he looked likeable and alive. She adored vitality and she never asked unnecessary questions.

"I don't want to look at Herodias, ascribed to Titian," she said. "I've grown sick of her."

"Well, that doesn't take long, I'll admit."

"I see her every day."

"Oh, I say, you know, this is morbid. Do you mean to say that you dub up half-a-crown every day to look at *her*. You ought to see a good man about that. Or is it a bet . . . or a penance?"

"More like a penance. I live here."

"You live here? I beg your pardon, I took you for a visitor. It's your wearing a hat. And you look rather like an American . . . smart and effective, you know."

"Merci vos compliments."

"Americans have a strange passion for old masters, 'specially doubtful ones."

"*You* don't look like an American."

"Merci *vos* compliments."

"But you've got a hat."

"Yes, that hat's always a difficulty. I'd go without it, but it's no good going without a hat unless you carry a butterfly net or eat nuts. . . . That's beyond me. . . . I generally dodge into the baronial hall and find a peg. I've sat on it before now. . . ."

"What's the matter with the hat? Don't you like it?"

"Oh, it's all right as a hat. But you can't look at home in a place—not really at home—if you're tied to a hat."

"No, I suppose a man can't. But why do you want to look at home?"

"If I didn't I might be thrown out. And then I couldn't study rich interiors."

"Rich interiors? . . . Don't *you* need to see a good man? Because you did pay half-a-crown."

"Yes, to my sorrow, but it had to be done. I put it to you . . . how can I advertise cigarettes without a rich interior? Or carpet-sweepers or dog-biscuits? Can't

be done. Soap, now, or radiators or wine. . . . Got to have rich interiors to show it's the sound stuff. Well now, here's a rich interior—one of the fruitiest—and here am I, studying it."

The light of comprehension dawned in Barbara Stanway's eye.

"You mean to say that you're an artist? You're not mad?"

"I leave the question open. Anyway, for my job I need to know all I can about posh places like this. Difficulty is to get my material. I haven't any friends with marble halls and so forth, so I've had to evolve a system. I visit show places where the public are admitted—places with an air. I go in with the first flight, dodge the column, and go out with the last batch. Simple, isn't it?"

"The last word. And ingenious . . . quite."

"But you see how I'm cursed by my hat. When I've got rid of it I'm a friend of the family—until then I'm a hag-ridden pariah. I start at every footfall."

"Give it to me. I wouldn't like you to crack up."

Miss Stanway bore away the hat, considerably intrigued by its owner. She had encountered Art—or, at least, Chelsea—many times and she had found it inclined to droop and pose. This artist did neither: he stood on his own feet and met the world with a keen and humorous eye.

She could imagine other expressions in those eyes. . . . She had a sense of recollection—of a recollection at the same time, vague and vivid—vivid in feeling, vague in everything else. She'd seen the light of battle in eyes like those. . . .

"You know," said Paul, on her return, "I'm not just a commercial hack. I'm a pukka dauber. And this studying atmosphere is a queer business sometimes."

"I should think there's stacks of fun in it."

"There's fun and fun. . . . I'll tell you the worst snag I ever struck that way. It was a snorting idea. I had my eye on the International with it. A big canvas—'The Night Club.' You know . . . artificial light . . . queer types . . . a generally jaded atmosphere . . ."

"As you might say 'the dope-soaked touch.'"

"You've said it. Well, I'd got to do that picture or bust. The lighting I could get anywhere in Soho. . . ."

"And the jaded look, I fancy."

"Quite. But what I wanted was the jolly old used-up, satanic effect. Well, for that I had to have the real thing. Subs and lush came a bit high—rather cleaned me out—but I could manage it about once a week. That was all I needed to keep me fresh. I was at it for about three months and I'd practically finished the thing when, one night, I came out of that club on my ear."

"Which ear?"

"I've forgotten. It doesn't matter."

"No, I mean to say . . . which club?"

"The Devilled Bone."

"The Devilled Bone!" Recollection came surging back to her in a great wave. She *had* seen the light of battle in those eyes. She lived again those few awful minutes in the "Devilled Bone" when a fat and loathly habitué had forced himself on her. She had gone alone, seeking adventure, and had found it. She felt again her fear and humiliation; and her vast relief when she'd caught Paul Conroy's eye and he had taken charge. . . .

Thrilled and grateful, she seized his hand.

"I felt sure I knew your face. Thanks most awfully for what you did."

"You that girl? Come up to the light. Yes, by Jove, so you are. How did you get out of it?"

"Cut off in a taxi and left my cloak. I've felt a cad ever since."

"Only thing to do. Apart from your get-away, I couldn't call the thing a success. By the formula the clean and lean hero—that's me—should have landed on the point, while the brutal libertine—your little friend . . ."

She shuddered. "Don't call him *my* little friend."

"Well, he wasn't mine by a jugful. He ought to have crumpled up. Not a bit like it. He may have trained on cocktails and cocaine, but he swung a useful mitt. I expected to go down the lift-shaft."

"How grim. What did he do?"

"His better feelings prevailed and he made it the stairs."

"What a ghastly finish."

"Finish! Not so much. That was just tapping the drum before the jazz started."

"Whatever else happened?"

"What should? Ricochetted into a bobby and finished up in Grape Street."

Barbara Stanway smiled as at something familiar. "Did you say Grape Street?"

"Where else? It always *is* Grape Street."

"Oh, but this is interesting. The Pater sits at Grape Street."

"Your father . . . it doesn't seem to compose. I mean to say, you hardly look a solid pillar of the State. And the old bird on the bench . . . well, the State wouldn't need any other pillars."

"We all have our hobbies. The Pater supports the State. . . ."

"While you adorn it."

"Oh, pretty work. . . . However, we digress. Resume, pour out the grief."

"Grief . . . it was all that. A night in the cells, a black eye and a split lip. In the morning a fine, costs, and 'remarks from the bench.' My ear still burns. . . . After that a taxi home. It cleaned me right out. I couldn't buy a frame for my picture and so I missed the International. With one thing and another I remember that evening well."

"How completely foul! You must have thought I was the last cat. But I tried all I knew to find you. I agonised in all the papers, from the *Morning Post* to the *Herald*."

"I don't often look at the funny column. And I don't see how I was to spot your ad."

"Oh, you would have done. I addressed it to 'My Hero' and signed it 'Damsel in Distress.'"

"A clean miss. It ought to have been 'Poor Mutt' and signed 'Miss Haroun-al-Raschid.'"

"Why that?"

"It was rather the idea, wasn't it?"

It was "rather the idea"—a manifestation of her adventurous quality. That quality had created the Miss "Babs" Stanway of the fashionable press—a vivid creature, but one that drew heavily on the energies of her creator.

Her hat-shop—now run by a syndicate—still existed elegantly near Hanover Square; but she had assumed many avatars since then. She had flown, had raced at Brooklands, had danced—diaphanously clad—at esoteric matinées. Her volume of short stories had almost paid for printing; and she had failed gallantly to enter Parliament in the Labour interest.

These were glories, but they were past glories; and latterly she had felt the faintest possible sensation of getting out of the stream. Well, perhaps, not out of the stream, but out of the swiftest of the current. Her particular coterie, the Brighter Birds, were altogether too imitative: and tarpon fishing had been almost a failure. Florida was too far off and while she was away her keenest rival had appeared in a talking film.

This wouldn't do. She would be out and under if she couldn't hit on something fresh.

She turned on Paul an appraising eye. She'd let him down badly and she ought to make it up. And if in making it up . . . The future glowed with the promise of a sound stunt.

"Yes," she said, "I suppose that was rather the idea. Just a bit of a solo speed-burst, but I never thought you'd get my dust like that. It was dire about the International."

"Frankly, it was. It put me back more than a bit."

"Well, look here, I'm going to put that right."

"I don't quite see how you can."

"I might do something. What about a commission for my portrait?"

"That would be handy. Thanks."

This being business, Paul saw no reason to display undue enthusiasm. His coolness left unaffected Miss Stanway's growing ardour. Still, it piqued her a little. This calm young man must have a hint of the glories in store. She began to make this clear.

"I suppose . . . how shall I put it? I suppose you know who I am?"

"I take it you're the 'Daughter of the House.' Also, I suppose, Miss 'Babs' Stanway—not unknown to a certain sort of fame."

"Oh, I say, look impressed if you don't feel it. Everybody else does."

"Believe me, overwhelmed."

"You bear up well under it. Still, as you say, not exactly unknown—if you haven't seen me in the shilling weeklies you haven't been looking. I had a page in the *Twaddler* last week in my Four Arts rig. I was 'Speed.' Didn't you see me?"

"In the *Twaddler*! I never look at it."

"At the 'Four Arts.'"

"Great Scott! You don't fancy I go there, do you?"

"Don't you?"

"I'd as soon wear a velveteen coat. You mustn't expect anything 'artistic' from me—I only paint."

"Well, that attitude's useful. You'll burst on them better."

"Burst on them? Who am I going to burst on?"

"Everybody . . . the Public . . . the World!"

"Hm, I guess it'll be with a delay-action

fuse. I don't exactly hear the explosion just yet."

"Left to yourself, perhaps not. But this is where I come in. This is absolutely where I shine. Now listen—you may not know it, but this social headline stuff takes some keeping up."

"It looks easy enough to me."

"Ah, you don't know."

"I mean that, surely, it's easy enough for you. You have only to exist."

"Nicely put, but . . . Take it from me, it's a dog's life. You can't ever relax—you're either in the first flight or nowhere." She dropped to a reflective note. "For the last month or so I've been seeing a red light. I could feel that I was sliding off the bus. I'd simply got to work some stunt, but what it was to be I hadn't the foggiest. It's getting the right thing—the thing with a snap. . . ."

Her bright eyes turned on Paul with an acquisitive gleam. "And now you drift in and simply eat out of my hand. It's Kismet or something."

Alight with enthusiasm, she continued, with superb insolence, to expound.

"Of course it has to be done in the right way. It all lies in timing the swing, and that's where my touch comes in. First of all you'll paint me. While you're doing that I shall talk about you a bit—just a remark or two where they'll do most good. And at the same time I'll take you about to a few of the right places. You know, so that folks will say, 'Who's Babs buzzing about with?'"

"Good Heavens!"

"What's the matter? Don't you want to be trotted about? Let me tell you, dear heart, that fellows have scrapped for the chance."

"I dare say—but they were chaps who hadn't anything better to do."

"Nothing better! My dear man . . ."

The implication was hardly polite, but things were getting serious. Paul Conroy was a man of parts. He had met and defeated, on their own ground, art editors and advertising managers. But here, he recognised, was real determination, something worthy of the name. Where it was to lead to he didn't know but dimly feared.

The general—self-appointed—was sketching out the details of the campaign.

"Have you a decent studio?"

"Right enough. Light's fair and it isn't too cold."

"No, I mean—is it a place you can take people to?"

"You mean tea-parties? I could, but I don't."

"Is there a gramophone?"

"This is blasphemy! No, there is *not* a gramophone."

"Well, that's soon cured. Of course, I don't want to interfere with your work. . . ."

"Oh no, I quite see that."

"But you mustn't neglect the social doings. You see, after you've painted me we must get all the others to queue up."

"The others?"

"*Nous autres*—those who count—my lot, in short."

With chilled blood Paul visualised "my lot" while his patroness rushed on in full spate of enthusiasm.

"Then you'll have a one-man show at one of the Bond Street places. And while that's on you'd better design some fancy dresses for a few of us. . . . It's simple—properly handled. Working together, we shall simply top the bill."

Paul exploded. "That's your appalling idea, is it? You want me to be tied round with pink ribbons and to paint chocolate-boxes?"

"Where *have* you been on the ice? Chocolate-boxes went out with the 'Perfect Lady.' No, purple and green slabs and things—something with a punch to it."

"Oh, I know the sort of thing . . . make your sitter leer and let the drawing go to the deuce. It's only the chocolate-box turned inside out."

"It's the sort of thing that fetches 'em and that pays."

"So do highway robbery and rolling pills. . . . But I don't mean to try any of them. If I fetch 'em I shall fetch 'em in my own way. I can't dance to your tune."

It was the naked clash of two incompatibles: of the artist and the Philistine, or, possibly, of two artists. That he should refuse the chance of rapid success she found incredible: that she couldn't see it as artistic damnation was inconceivable to him.

The deadlock was complete. Reluctantly—for the struggle was good fun, and the opponent attractive—Paul essayed to depart.

"It's a pity, all this," he said. "We might have been friends. I see there's nothing for it but to buzz off. I'd like my hat, if you don't mind."

The fair enemy unmasked a gun.

"Now, that's a difficulty. You don't know where it is and I do."

"Eh? Eh, what's that?"

"Yes . . . think it over."

"Are you trying blackmail?"

"Holding to ransom is considered better form. Call it that."

It was certainly something to think over. A man without a hat in a concourse of decorous sightseers was deplorably conspicuous. Paul felt trapped. It was hopeless to try to get through the house. He would make a break for the window.

"Charming garden," he said, and edged towards the hasp.

But he had changed the subject too quickly. Barbara Stanway moved over to a bell-push.

"No," she said, shaking her head and waving a deprecatory hand, "I wouldn't do that. If you try I'll have you thrown out."

"Thanks to you, I'm used to that. I shan't like it, but there are worse things."

"There *are*. Before you are thrown out I shall telephone to the local correspondent of the *Spotlight*. He's an enterprising young man and has a motor-cycle."

Paul came away from the window. "This," he said, "is inhuman."

"It's thirty-two pages of photographs, isn't it? *Do* you want to be indicated by a cross?"

"I wouldn't care to insult the late-lamented Delilah . . . otherwise . . ."

Barbara Stanway pressed the bell-push. It was a flick of the whip to Paul. She saw him flinch and pounced.

"You submit? You'll paint my portrait?"

"I'll paint you as ugly as sin, and all your friends will say, 'How like.'"

"And all *your* friends will say, 'How like . . . well, you know.'"

"Serpent!" said Paul, and then froze. There was a knock at the door, which opened to admit a manservant, perfect as the household he served and adorned.

Barbara Stanway ordered tea to be served and Paul relaxed. "I believe," he said, "that I called you 'serpent' just now. You'll forgive me, won't you?"

"I forgive anything to a man in a panic."

"Well, I dare say you've had experience."

WHEN tea arrived Miss Stanway proved the most charming of hostesses. She had gained the first position and felt that she could afford to be kindly. As she said, you can always talk things over better when you're comfortable.

"But," said Paul, "there's nothing to talk over. You want something that I can't concede—I can't afford to. That's the position and there it will remain."

She let that go, merely remarking that things always began like that; trusting to the effect of delicious cakes and fragrant tea.

There ensued a period of silent strain and Paul was relieved when she threw beyond his shoulder a bright glance and an insouciant welcome, "Hello, Bimbo, come and join the glad throng."

He rose and turned, expecting to see some sprightly contemporary. "Shades of the prison-house . . ." It was indubitably the "old bird on the bench," wearing—even in the home—something of a magisterial air.

Grateful for the diversion, Paul subdued some natural qualms and began to make conversation. Remarking that it was a fine day, he began to embroider on the theme. "Extraordinary how we always begin a conversation in the same old way. Really, we ought to have some other openings by now. As soon as an introduction is over we say the same old things about the weather."

Mr. Stanway, like his daughter, had intelligence; but the habit of reflection—to which she was a stranger—had subdued it to a dry shrewdness. He was disconcertingly brief.

"Or even," he said, "before it is completed."

It was a crucial moment, met by Miss Stanway with customary aplomb.

"Sorry, Bimbo—this is Scoop."

"Charmed," said her father, accepting the attitude with a fine smile; and Paul took up the tale.

"Yes, sir, Paul Conroy to a few—'Scoop' to the world."

"'The world' is a very comprehensive term."

"The artistic world is what Mr. Conway means."

This would never do, his hostess must get the name right. Paul wondered if her father had noticed the slip. There was, perhaps, an edge to his next remark.

"Ah, yes. I rather thought that Mr. . . ."

"Conroy," said Paul.

". . . was some sort of artist."

"Is this flattery, Bimbo?"

"No—description." He turned on Paul an eye uncomfortably keen. "I seem to know your face. Have we met before?"

"No . . . no, I think not. I shouldn't have forgotten, I'm sure."

"I rarely forget a face. I might almost say—never."

Barbara addressed Paul as one exhibiting a rare piece.

"I always tell Bimbo he should go on to the halls with that memory." She turned to her father. "Anything thrilling to-day—any heart-throbs?"

"No, nothing interesting. Far too many cases from the night clubs. They're a pest. That's my deliberate opinion—a pest."

Paul acquiesced warmly. "I'm with you,



"'Oh, have it your own way. Say I came to pinch the fire-irons. I don't care. Bring on the gyves.'"

sir. They're run by thieves, and the stuff they sell wouldn't be drunk in the States."

"Indeed!"

"I mean to say . . . that's what fellows say."

Barbara lent a helping hand. "Fellows who've been in America."

"Or," said her father, "fellows who've been to night clubs. . . . Have you studied the working of the memory, Mr. Conroy?"

"I don't know that I have—not particularly."

"I mean the way that memory works by association; how the faintest recollection can be supported by another until a chain is formed—so to speak—and what was a mere passing idea becomes a certainty?."

"You mean the mind jerks stunt? I've seen it advertised."

"In your delightful idiom, 'the mind jerks stunt.' Let me detail to you an interesting example. You will recollect that when we met I thought I knew your face. Well, I couldn't be sure, so I put the idea aside. Then my daughter spoke of the work at my court and I was immediately aware of a sense of association—an association of your face with that court. . . ."

"Oh, you know, there are a good many faces like mine."

"Do you think so? You're the first young man I've heard admit the possibility."

"That's Scoop to the last tack," Barbara broke in. "Modesty, you know—he fairly drips."

"Is that so?" Mr. Stanway raised his eyebrows. "Ah, well, to resume. . . . Our talk went on to night clubs, and in my mind the association became immensely strengthened. What had been the faintest suspicion became a certainty. Interesting . . . very interesting. . . ."

"May be interesting to you, Bimbo, but why to us?"

"Perhaps not to you, my dear; but I'm sure it will interest . . ." He paused for emphasis. ". . . George Henry Higgs!"

Paul was blandly inquiring. "Possibly . . . who is our friend George?"

"Six months ago he was you."

Paul continued bland but now he threw in a touch of appeal. "Do you know, sir, I think you ought to give this new thought stuff a miss. Interesting, of course, but misleading."

"You deny that you're Higgs?"

"Certainly, I'm Paul Conroy. In artistic circles—with which I doubt if you're familiar—I'm rather well known."

"When I move in artistic circles I'll inquire. Meanwhile, perhaps you'll show me proof that you are Paul Conroy."

Barbara was now the indignant hostess. "Really, Pater," she said, "this is a bit steep. Mr. Conroy is a friend of mine."

"I'm afraid that doesn't take us far. Socially, you're a little adventurous. Like other girls, you judge for yourself—and the results are not always happy. What I want is proof that this man isn't the libertine, the tavern brawler, that I fined six months ago for scandalous misconduct."

Barbara clapped. "Straight from the shoulder," she exclaimed, "good old parent!"

Her father, however, continued to fix Paul with a bodeful eye and the weight of an awful pause descended. It was ended by a knock and the entry of the flawless James, whose face betrayed a decorous concern.

"May I speak to you a moment, sir?" he said.

"Certainly, James. What is it?"

"Well, sir . . . we've just got rid of the last of the sightseers, sir."

"Yes."

"And . . . well, sir, we're always very careful about counting them in and out. You have to be careful, sir, with a lot of valuable things about."

"Very commendable, James."

"And . . . well, sir, we're one wrong in the count, as you might say."

"How is that?"

"There's one less gone out than came in, sir. It looks as if somebody is concealed in the house. You can't be too careful—not nowadays, sir. There's a lot of queer things happened since the War. Some of the objects of art, sir, are very tempting, sir."

"Yes, James, you're right. We can't be too careful. Have the house searched."

"We've done that, sir. High and low, as the saying is."

"Very good, James. I will let you know if I want you."

James withdrew and Mr. Stanway turned to the other two.

"Yes," he said, "to quote the excellent James, a good many queer things have happened since the War. It might be considered queer that I should find in my house, having tea with my daughter, a man whom I've had before me in the dock."

Paul tried stone-walling.

"It would be queer."

"It *is*."

The awkward pause descended anew. Paul produced his card. After all, it's

doubtful if even gentlemen burglars carry cards. Mr. Stanway favoured it with a markedly cold attention.

"I see," he said, "that this card bears the name of your club—with which I am unfamiliar. That would be most useful to anyone who wished to visit your studio."

"They could look me up or drop me a line. Besides, I've just moved into a new studio and haven't my fresh cards printed."

"Your explanations are very adroit." Mr. Stanway pressed the bell and James appeared with a promptness either creditable or suspicious.

"James," said his master, "perhaps you recognise this gentleman."

"Come to look at him, I think I do, sir." He looked intently at Paul. "Yes, sir, he came in with the three-o'clock lot, sir."

"Thank you, James, that will do. You might ring up the police station for me."

Barbara intervened with a quiet force.

"Don't do that, James."

"Do as I say, James."

"Not yet. We'll let you know when we want you, James."

There was a silent clash of personalities, ended by Mr. Stanway's light shrug of defeat. When James had closed the door Barbara resumed her lighter manner.

"You know, Bimbo, you've got a bobby complex. Suppress it. Why the police?"

Paul was desperately persuasive.

"I wouldn't have the police in if I were you, sir. It looks second class. Sort of thing that gives a place a bad name. I'll go quietly—with James if you like. It's all I want—to go quietly."

Mr. Stanway was rhadamanthine.

"You did come in with the three-o'clock party, didn't you?"

"I suppose I did. It seems ages ago now."

"Why did you come and what were you after?"

"Oh, have it your own way. Say I came to pinch the fire-irons. I don't care. Bring on the gyves."

The occasion called for boldness and didn't call in vain. With Miss Stanway occasion rarely did.

"I know why he did it, Bimbo, but you'll never get him to own up."

Paul supplied a comment.

"Well, it does seem a bit silly . . . in cold blood. You see, sir, I'm an artist . . ."

"So I've heard you say. The evidence seems to be lacking."

"But he *is*, Bimbo," said Barbara. "He's a great artist. He'll be in the Academy in no time."

The tribute missed its aim. Paul turned icily on his panegyrist.

"Did you say the Academy? We may have, Miss Barbara, quarrelled, but there's no need to spit venom."

"Paul Conroy, you miserable little dauber . . ." Barbara pulled herself up. It was no time for the luxury of a row. "You see, Bimbo, he's frightfully romantic."

"Indeed! The modern manner, I presume."

"Oh, that's just his way, you know. Really, he's all mushy inside. And he's poor, quite horribly poor."

"Well, that's right enough." The merest crumb of truth was grateful to Paul, but Barbara swept joyously on the stream of invention.

"So, though he's frantically batchy on me, he was afraid to call. Until he had a simply gilt-edged spasm. . . . He came in as an ordinary rubber-neck . . ."

"He came in as what?"

"A rubber-neck . . . a person who pays at the gate. He sprung half-a-crown just to 'gaze on the roof that shelters me' and all that."

Paul rushed up the supports. "Yes, sir, that was so. And then there were the chairs she sat on, you know . . . and the sward she pressed with her little feet . . . and . . . and the goldfish she fed and so on and so forth. . . . Quite a healthy half-dollar's-worth, believe me."

"And then, Bimbo, there was me! . . . Me, myself! It fairly pushed him endwise. . . . So I had to give him tea."

"Yes . . . yes . . . I suppose one always gives a hopeless adorer tea."

"You simply can't do less."

"It puzzles me how he got you to believe all this. But I suppose you're so extremely clever and modern that you can't tell an honest man from a rogue."

"Oh, you're prejudiced, just because you've seen him in the dock."

"So I *have* seen him in the dock?" Mr. Stanway turned on Paul the face of a hanging judge. "So you *are* George Higgs?"

"Oh no, sir, my name *is* Conroy. But there's an etiquette in these things; when you're run in you give a false name . . . it saves the old folks worry, so to speak."

"Higgs or Conroy, it doesn't signify much. The point is that I've had you before me in the dock."

Barbara burst in. "Oh, that's quite the best thing about him."

"I've heard things more to a man's credit.'

"No, you haven't. It was his being in the dock and keeping his mouth shut. If he hadn't I might have been well in the potage."

Her father sighed. "I give it up. If you spoke English I might have a chance to understand. . . ."

"I was in it, well up to the neck. I was there on the night of the party."

"I don't recall seeing you in the dock."

"No, but I might have been in the witness-box—and that's as bad." She continued in a breathless rush. "You see, it was like this: I was walking down Shaftesbury Avenue. It was a nice night and I thought I might as well. Also I wanted to see life."

"Queer taste. . . . Did you?"

"I suppose I did. . . . Anyway, a great big fat beast of a man started to follow me and I told him not to and he would. He kept on following me and I didn't know what to do. Then Paul came up. I didn't know him then, but he's awfully quick at noticing things and he saw there was trouble. And so he told him to buzz off and he wouldn't, and so he hit him and that started it."

"Very lucid . . . apparently someone hit somebody else. And what did you do?"

"I cut off and got a taxi."

"And left your man being hammered? Was that exactly sporting?"

"I made her nip off," said Paul. "There was really nothing else for it, was there?"

"I suppose not. But, Barbara, I'm afraid that wasn't absolutely modern. Almost Victorian, I should call it."

"But you see, sir, the other chap was a bit primitive, wasn't he?"

"He was of all ages. And you, Mr. Conroy, were positively mediæval." As he said this Mr. Stanway gave a charming little bow. "I misjudged you very badly, but I understood that you had been fighting in a night-club."

"Oh no, sir, that's not my hobby at all. But the shemozzle started just outside one. That's how the rumour started and I thought it better to leave well alone."

"You call that leaving well alone?"

"I mean to say it hung together nicely and covered Miss Stanway's tracks. So I let it go at that. . . . There's nothing like letting a yarn run on its own feet."

Mr. Stanway was silent for a while. Then he jerked his head with a touch of humorous despair. "You young people . . ." he said. "Well, you're a spectacle, anyway. . . . But perhaps a little exhausting. I wonder if you would excuse me?"

"Are you leaving us, Bimbo?"

"If I may. The mental digestion also slows up with the years." He held out his hand to Paul. "Good day, Galahad. I'll leave the accolade to Barbara."

When her father had closed the door Barbara turned to Paul the radiant face of the successful liar.

"Applaud me. Haven't I got a touch? Didn't I get you out of that very nicely?"

Paul heard the faint chink of sentimental fetters. "Out of it!" he said. "You have a happy gift of expression. . . . And now I'd like my hat, if you don't mind."

"Why? You don't want to go, do you?"

"I don't want to rush away, exactly; but I'd like to have it as a sort of guarantee."

"And suppose I didn't let you have it?"

"That, I take it, would reopen the whole question. . . . By Jove, no, it wouldn't! . . . You *have* got me out of it! I can ring that bell and order the impeccable James to get the thing for me. Popular enthusiasm, expressed in cheers."

Barbara was taken aback. She fought conviction for a while, but Paul's elation and the force of logic brought the truth home.

"Oh, Lud!" she said, "so you can." She rang the bell herself. "You and Bimbo think I'm not a sport, but I can take the knock."

Bewildered but still calm—he had ambitions and meant to be a butler—James was despatched for the hat. Then Barbara voiced her woe.

"Rotten, truly rotten. A good stunt gone phut . . . it's enough to drive a girl to good works."

The stricken hart—the warrior come ungummed—are affecting sights. They rouse in the onlooker, compunction, the desire to help; also a pleasing sense of superior ability. All these Paul felt as Barbara—drooped and diminished—confronted him. She had helped him out of an unpleasant hole. He was a free man and—if he stuck to his guns—she might not be so very formidable a menace to his artistic integrity. Perhaps, after all . . . Yes, he'd take a chance.

He grinned. "Cheer up . . . er . . . Babs, you've still got me."

"Irony! He snorts in triumph."

"Never a snort. This romantic attach-

ment, this . . . engagement, shall we call it? . . . is quite an idea. There's a new note in it."

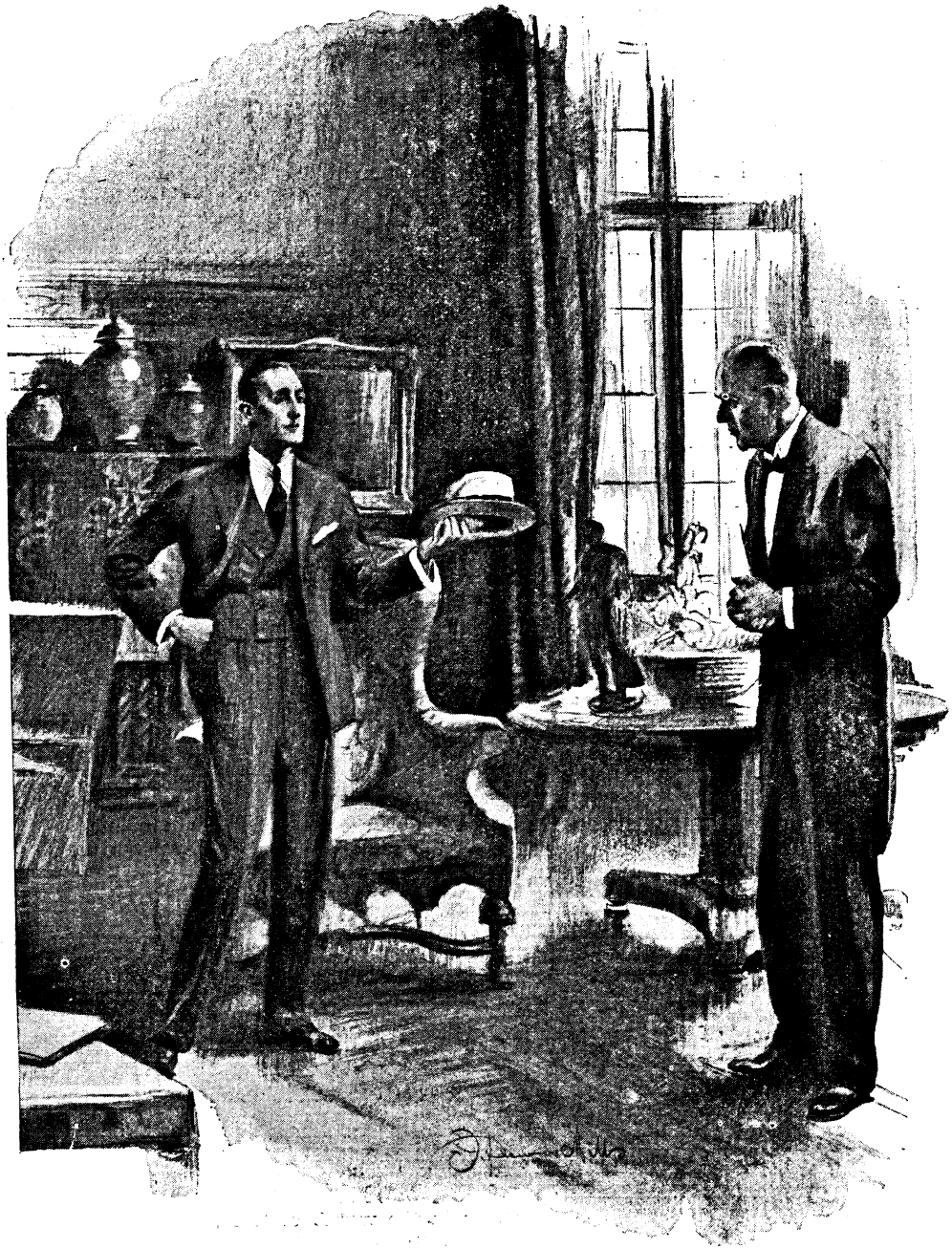


"There can't be a new note in an engagement."

"Think not? Just you look it over. Not only have you . . . ahem . . . discovered the obscure genius; you've thrown yourself away on him. 'The world well lost'—it's so old-fashioned that it's absolutely new. It seems to me that I've got to teach you your own job."

Barbara put aside the aspersion. The thing might be worth thinking of. Possibil-

ities began to loom. . . . Then James returned with the hat. She took it from him and—with a gesture—handed it to its owner.



"'Will you kindly put this hat where you found it?'"

"The badge of victory," she said, "take and wear it."

"Let's talk over the terms first. If I consent to be discovered you'll have to drop your frightful idea of making me into a sort of prize chow. Is it a deal?"

"Yes, call it a deal."

"No gramophone hops?"

"All right."

"No first nights?"

"Oh, Lud! Oh, very well."

"The minimum of photographs in the illustrated papers?"

"It sounds about as exciting as a warm ice."

"Yes, it is dull. But everything has to be paid for in this life. If I'm to arrive I've got to work, and I can't do that if I'm fooling all over London with you."

"I'm wondering if I come in anywhere."

"There's stacks for you in it. You're the self-sacrificing fiancée, anyway . . . you can be the guide and inspiration . . . within limits."

"Thanks."

"There's the chance of a devilish fine partnership in this. You find me the commissions, I do the work, and we share the glory."

"And then?"

"Plague take the woman—that's all you were asking for. But if we are to look ahead—and it's awfully inartistic to look too far—there's a fascinating choice. We might even marry . . ."

"That's an idea. Then I could start a salon."

"We might quarrel."

"It's possible to do both."

"Sure . . . but one thing at a time. If we marry, it'll be the wedding of the season; if we quarrel, you can write your reminiscences."

"I could marry you and still do that."

"Oh no, then you'd have to be amiable. If we quarrelled first you could tell the truth. Meanwhile . . ."

He took her forefinger between his finger and thumb. A little bewildered, she could only repeat, "Meanwhile—— ?"

"A little ceremony," he said, "symbolical, you know."

He led her to the bell-push and together they pressed it. James entered yet once more, permitting himself the slightest shade of an expression. It was a faintly weary expression, to be interpreted—perhaps—as, "'im again."

"Yes, Miss Barbara?" said James.

"James," said Paul.

"Yes . . . sir?"

"Will you kindly put this hat where you found it?"

James bowed. Then—with no expression whatever—he bore the trophy away.

FOG.

THE trees are all nightmare shapes
Sprawled gauntly against the gloom;
Black, with distorted arms
That search in vain for the sky.

No sound but the pitiless drip
Of rain from the groping branches;
No life but the muffled passing
Of silent and shrouded figures;
Nothing but shadows and silence,
And the drip, drip of the trees.

Then, sudden as falling stars,
A bird sings . . .
Of Spring that quickens in the womb of time,
Of dappled skies, and lovers' lips,
And apple-trees in bloom . . .
Sings, and the voice of Hope
Strikes quivering through the gloom!

ETHEL MANNIN.



AT THE SALES.

"Have you any invisible hair net?"
"Yes, madam."
"Can I see one, please?"

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

ANOTHER SCRAP OF PAPER

By T. Hodgkinson

MARIAN always aims at being in the fashion even in the matter of her note-paper, and, as soon as the purchase of our country cottage was complete, the question of suitably headed stationery arose.

"People judge you from your paper," she informed me. "It tells them . . ."

"If you are cream laid or torn out of an exercise book," I suggested, and received a patient explanation that the mode of the moment was to strike a personal note by heading your paper with a facsimile of your handwriting. I was also informed that she had already ordered a supply.

"I hope you wrote nicely," I said, but it appeared that she had done nothing of the kind. A scrap of paper on which I had happened to scrawl the new address had been sent as a pattern, on the theory that the head of the house should also head its stationery.

In the face of such an unusual compliment I forbore to argue. I had other matters on hand. There was, for instance, the matter of Uncle Walter.

Uncle Walter had gone to America long long ago, but, now that he was coming to London, I was prepared to be his favourite nephew on the smallest provocation, and he was to be our first guest. In his honour we would pile high the logs, regardless of overheating our imitation antique fireback, and put the least leaky hot-water bottle in the spare bed.

Dulce Domum, as our cottage had been called, presumably by the ancient Roman who

built it and did not know any better, is what is known as "charming-old-world," but, as Marian says, with a kind husband and a good mackintosh it is not really inconvenient having the water supply fifty muddy yards from the kitchen.

Its appeal to Uncle would, we hoped, be two-fold. If he loved the antique, he would admire our taste, and if he was looking for signs of deserving poverty, they would not be wanting. And in any case the presence of my overcoat and a travelling rug on his bed would testify to the warmth of our welcome.

His letter had announced not only his date of arrival, but the hotel at which he had already made his reservation, and our invitation was timed accordingly.

"Just a little welcome when he arrives," said Marian, as she wrote it on the first sheet of her new paper.

"To show that somebody loves him besides the lift-boy," I added, but apparently Uncle preferred the boy. At any rate, he showed no signs of dropping in as invited, nor was there even a reply to our note. And I went up to town to pay a formal call and prevent that lift-boy having a walk over.

Uncle's was evidently a busman's holiday. His private sitting-room at the Hotel Splendax was severely business-like, the only attempt at decoration being a portrait of his mother and several neatly framed cards bearing such uplifting mottoes as "There's a Possible Customer born Every Minute" and "Do Him Now." And his manner was equally severe.

Although it was after opening time, there was a singular lack of enthusiasm about his welcome, as I tactfully hinted that doubtless the cares of business had prevented his replying to our note.

"Cares of business be blowed," he said in his bluff American way. "Why don't you put a sufficient address on your letters?" And he went on to tell how he and a hired car had spent a whole day searching for our cottage and only found two punctures and a cold in the head.

"But everyone round Belchester knows Dulce Domum," I said. "It's the oldest cottage in Essex."

"Round where?" he roared. "I went to Ribchester," and when I remarked that that was in Sussex, he only maintained that it was what was written on Marian's paper. I recalled her description of the pattern as an old scrawl of mine, but it was no good trying to explain this to Uncle. He did not give me time.

"You evidently can't write," he said. "Can you read?" and he indicated his largest motto.

"Get on or Get Out" was the way it ran, and, as it was obvious I wasn't getting on, my course was clear. I chose the other alternative, but, mark you, without malice.

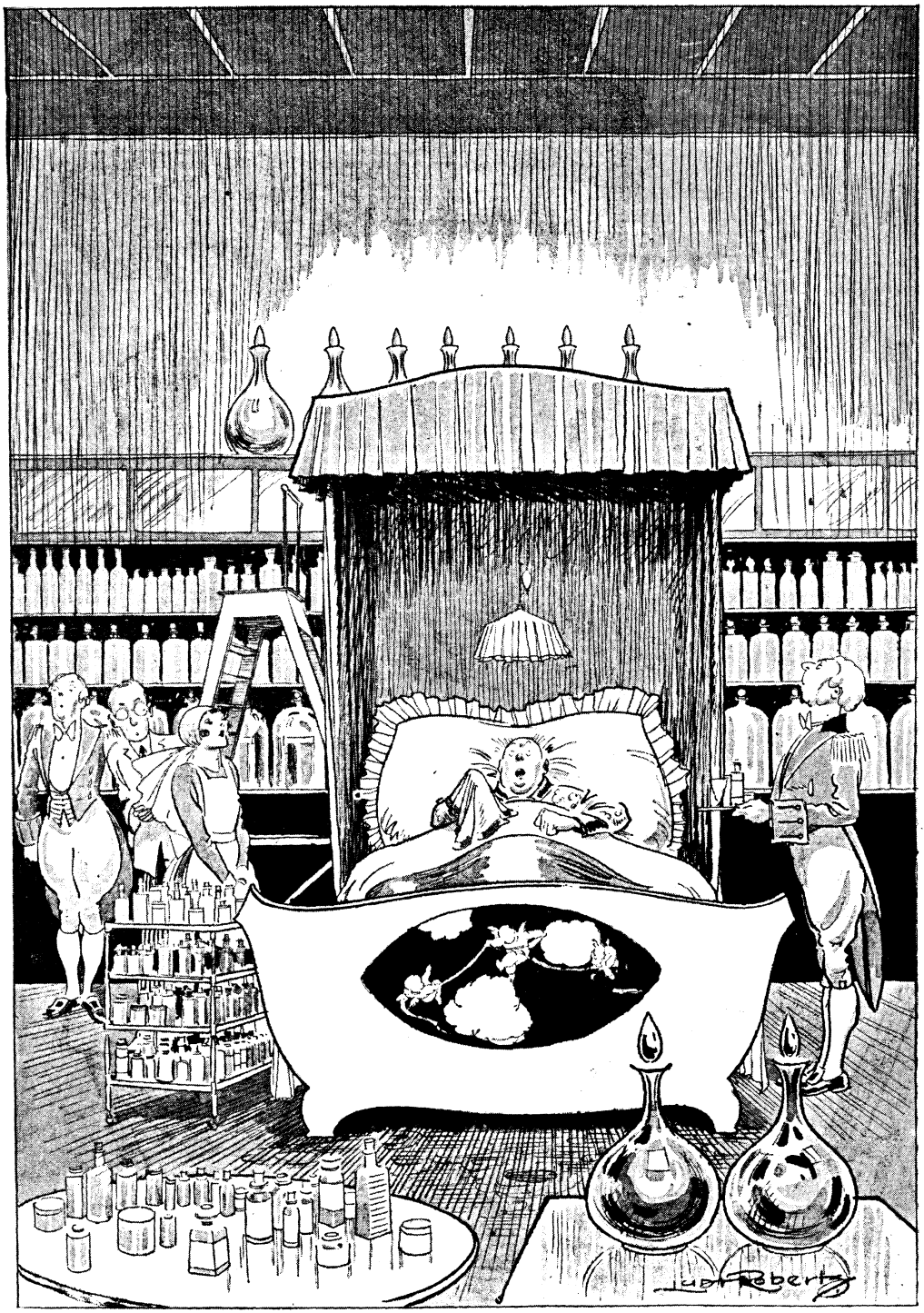
I am still prepared to be his favourite nephew on the smallest provocation, but at the moment there is no provocation at all. And meanwhile Marian is anxious to know when I am going to have a bonfire. She has half a ream of waste paper of which she wants to get rid.



AFTERMATH OF CHRISTMAS.

DICKY: Try to wangle me another box of those pills, nurse, they just fit my pea-shooter.


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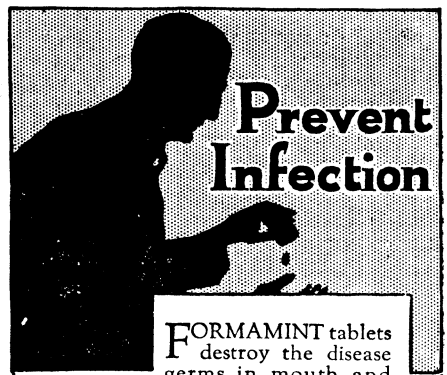
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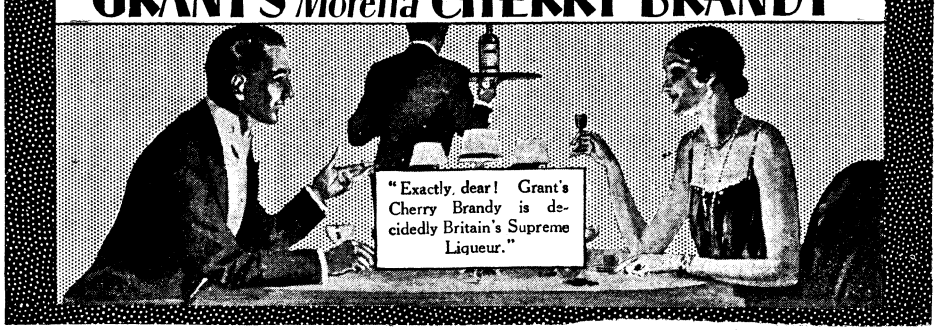
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PATIENT: Some fule knocked m' whiskey on the flure!



VISITOR: Well, Peter, and what will you do when you're as big as Daddy?
PETER (shortly): Diet!

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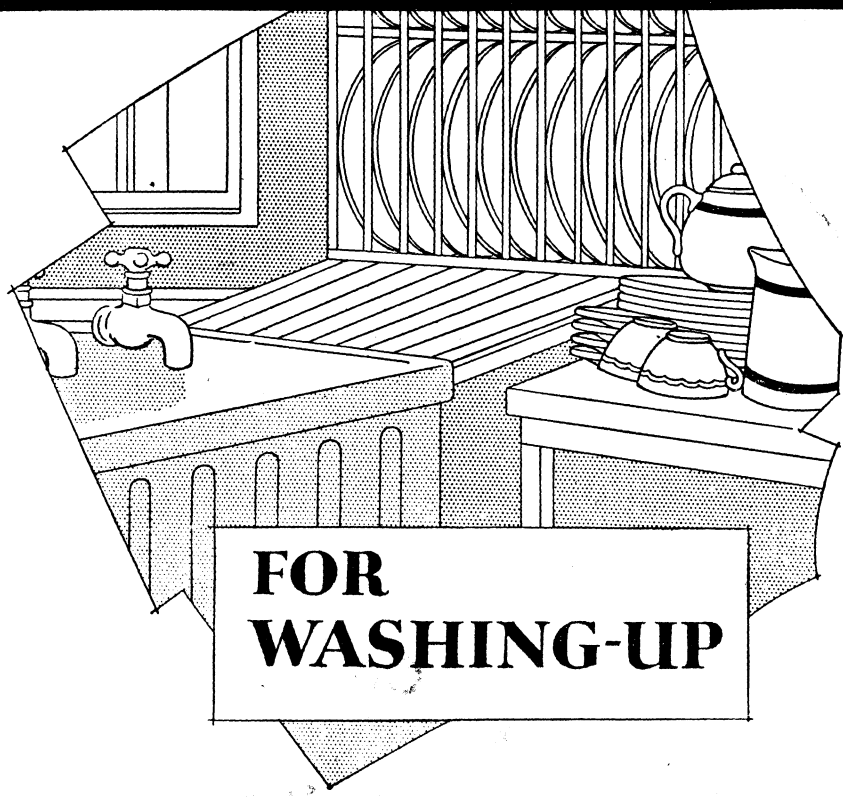
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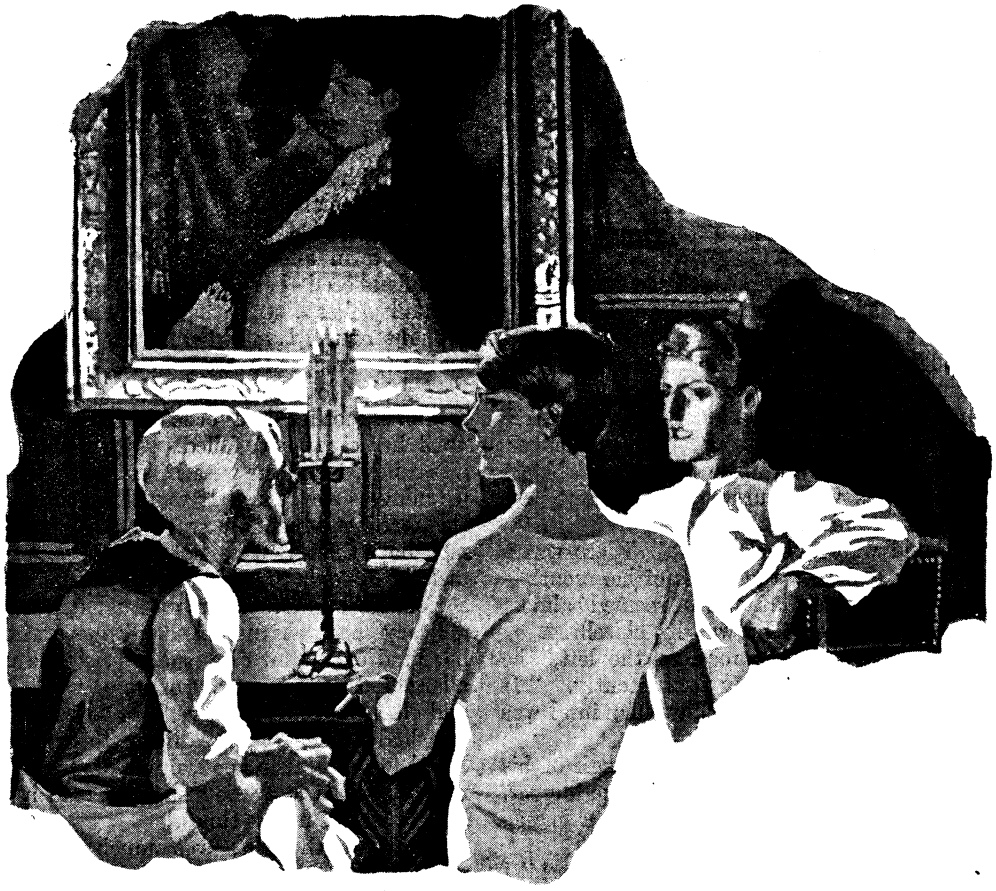
OUR GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS: RUGBY,
By Capt. F. A. M. WEBSTER,

CELEBRITIES IN PLASTER,

CANADA'S VALLEY OF THE KINGS.



"'Open the door! We're friendly travellers of the highway, old man! Open quickly—or, by the Olympian gods, we drown!'" (*See page* 289.)



"'The gentleman in the picture is very like your friend, if I may say so, sir.'"

BLACK HORSES

By STEPHEN PHILLIPS

ILLUSTRATED BY ROLAND M. CHANDLER

I CANNOT tell you what a strange feeling possessed me as I trudged across the brow of the hill and saw that eerie signpost creaking in the wind. It was a feeling I do not remember ever having known before, save once—and that, I may tell you, in France during the war. How can I describe it to you? Perhaps I should say it was the feeling of a magnificent unreality.

I paused and stole a glance at David Imklof, friend of my bosom since the day we learned to make speech with our lips. I was curious to know if he had the same sensation as I. But his face, lit by the wild lights of the stormy English sky, told me nothing—except that I saw how eager were his eyes as they stared back into my own.

"Which way do we travel now?" I asked, quite unable to keep a note of challenge, of ridicule, from my voice.

I suppose my scorn touched him, for David Imklof was a sensitive being. He turned his back upon me and walked slowly towards the dark, ghostly signpost, a spot

of angry red in his cheek. He stood staring up at it in silence, while I stood watching the lights in the sky, full of impatience to be on the move again, for we had not eaten since midday and tramping the hills and valleys had sharpened my appetite.

"Well?" I said peevishly. "What does it say?"

"Nothing!" he told me, with an odd little laugh. And then I perceived that the lettering on the arms had been rubbed out by time and weather.

It was something of a predicament, I thought. I could see no sign of house or farm. The muddy roads went this way and that, winding for lonely miles beneath the uncanny heavens. I felt a spot or two of rain upon my upturned face, and black, torn clouds were hurrying up. There was a storm coming.

David walked back to me. There was a peculiar smile at the edges of his mouth—a mouth which at times seemed almost effeminate, so tender was its chiselling.

"Let us take the road to the left," he suggested, watching my face intently. "It will lead us to that old Cromwellian inn I was telling you about."

I glowered, for I had had enough of his leg-pulling, and there is nothing like hunger, unappeased, to put an edge on a man's temper.

"This isn't a moment for making fun!" I snapped. "We shall be wet to the skin in a few minutes!"

His eyes were searching, strangely eager, as they scanned my angry face.

"Old man, you're proving as pig-headed as ever. Do you still doubt all I've been telling you?"

"I think it's utter rubbish!" I growled. "Come on, let's toss for it, shall we?"

He shook his head serenely.

"No. We're going to lie up dry and snug in that old inn while the storm breaks, Johnnie, my lad. Haven't I told you that I know this spot—that I've been this way before?"

"There are bats in your belfry, David! You know quite well that you haven't been within fifty miles of this place in your life!"

"Not in this life, I agree," he said. "In some other life, Johnnie—*in some other life.*"

Again, as I stared into his face, I became aware of that odd, eerie thrill. The materialism—the grossness in my nature, perhaps—was battling against the almost brutal conviction which his more sensitive personality was attempting to force upon me. David Imklof, I knew, had long believed in such things, in reincarnation, in the life that is given only that it may pass onward into something greater and more self-satisfying. David, I believe, had held that belief almost from childhood, for he had always been a clever, unusual child.

I remembered his mother, a woman of slender form and yet of amazing vitality. I remembered her gentleness, her intellectuality, her kind, rather elusive ways. I thought of the lawn where she always sat, and the creeper-covered house, and the books she loved so passionately. David Imklof's mother had been a great reader until her sight had failed. Often, when I was a boy, I had sat with David at her feet, listening as she read. It was the melody of the reading which always seemed to hold me, boy that I was, not the subject—a melody difficult to explain, save that it had a richness of diction, an unusual depth of delicacy and charm. And always, when her kind eyes grew dim, she would take up a large red book, the print of which was bold and clear, and finish her reading to us while the shades of night came gliding to our feet. I had forgotten the book, or its name, or of what it told, but I know she had read it to David many, many times.

David, I thought, was much like his mother. The gentleness of the mouth was there, the fine white loftiness of the brow. He had the courage which had been hers also, for had I not seen it many times in the war? A wild, thoughtless kind of courage which had always laughed at death. I owed David Imklof a debt difficult to repay, since he had dragged my screaming body from that mad hell which was as a sheet of flame across my soul. Whenever I gazed upon him and saw the terrible scar that ran from ear to neck, I felt my spirit grow in tumult; for David Imklof would carry that scar to the end of his days—a scar which he had taken in saving me. For many days afterwards he had lain close against the wings of the last dark angel, and even after his recovery his mind had always been a painful affair of light and shadow. Some compartments of David Imklof's brain, since that flaming inferno of the war, had been as lifeless blanks, so that at times he had brilliant flashes of recollection, while of some things he had no remembrance at all. But I would never let him see how pathetic I thought it.

As I have said, David Imklof had been my

bosom friend since childhood days. We were different from each other both in the texture of mind and body, and perhaps that is why we found the association such a pleasant one in many ways. It was David himself who had suggested that we set out on tramp, knapsacks on our backs, faces turned to the wind, the rain and the sun. I had agreed enthusiastically, for I love the wildness of the open places. Yet, as we had tramped along, I had noticed a kind of eager pleasure taking possession of him, a delight that was almost child-like. For days I had wondered, saying nothing, and then one evening he had turned to me and said quietly: "Johnnie, old scout, I think I've travelled this way before."

Of course, I laughed a little, for I knew that he had done nothing of the kind. I had proof, beyond a doubt, that David Imklof had never walked that path before. And yet, I say, he seemed to *know*. I thought of the time, back along the highway, when he had paused suddenly and looked about him, just as if he were searching for a well-known landmark. And, with an odd little laugh, he had picked out the proper road that we should follow. No signpost had there been, nor any passing wayfarer from whom we might inquire. My perplexity had grown upon me as we went along.

From youth, a heritage perhaps from the kind woman who had loved books, David Imklof had interested himself more in matters of the spirit than of the flesh. And, from this interest, his firm conviction had grown, as a flower finds life upon a green stem. "I believe," he would tell me, in that oddly casual, serious fashion, "that life is made up of passing phases, Johnnie. I believe that when we die, as we all must do, we are immediately born again, perhaps in a very different guise, perhaps in a guise almost the same as before. Haven't you ever felt that, old man? Haven't you ever had some little experience—a feeling, as you step out of a train, perhaps—that you know the place to which it has brought you, although you have never set foot in it previously? I have—many, many times. Odd little sensations, Johnnie, aren't they?"

I, naturally, had rebelled against such an idea, for my nature is neither so imaginative nor intense. In my estimation, the thought was absurd. And yet, how might one account for the quite uncanny topographical knowledge which had come to him? I should repeat, perhaps, David Imklof had never been in that part of England before—never. But he knew the topography as if he were reading from a map, and any kind of map, of guide, had been gravely forsworn by both of us before we set out, for it seemed to us as if it must tend to rob our journey of its joyous abandon.

How, then, had this knowledge come to him?

I confess that I could find no plausible explanation, save that offered by David himself, in his own words: "In some other life, Johnnie—*in some other life.*"

I looked again at the lights in the stormy sky. The wind was rising to a mournful howl through the leafless trees which edged the hill. It was going to be a beastly night, I could see, and we were in the very devil of a hole, by all appearances.

I started off impulsively, taking the middle road—an almost indistinguishable track, with mud inches deep and pools of water which gleamed beneath the approaching storm. I had not gone far along this track, splashing and stumbling, when I felt David's hand on my arm, gripping with an eager strength.

"Not that way! There are no houses along there! Follow me!"

I was angry and sarcastic.

"You forget," I pointed out, "they've been building since you were here last."

But he ignored the silly gibe. Almost against my will, certainly against my better sense, I found myself tagging indignantly at his heels across the squelching marshland. The lights went out of the sky as we staggered on. The drops of rain grew bigger and more numerous. At last, he stopped.

"Years ago," he said, in a matter-of-fact voice, "there was a pitched battle fought here between the Roundheads and the Cavaliers. Do you see that big mound yonder?"

I looked, something like a sneer on my lips. All I could see was the massing of the dark clouds, and the warning lights which now had almost hurried across the horizon.

"You think I'm talking through my hat, eh?" he said suddenly, with unaccustomed warmth. "You don't think I can take you straight to that inn—*The Passing Pilgrim*?"

It seemed to me as if he got the name out with some great effort of memory, and I stared at him in speechless astonishment.

"Who the devil told you there was an inn of that odd name in this locality?" I demanded, at last.

He shook his head gently.

"Johnnie, I'm beginning to despair of

you altogether! Haven't I told you that I was here before, many years ago—hundreds of years, perhaps? And you still have the hardihood to doubt me, eh? I tell you," his voice was deep, earnest, strangely sincere—"I tell you, Johnnie, there was an inn called *The Passing Pilgrim* during the days of the Civil War. It was used a lot by the younger Cavaliers. And it stood"—he turned slowly and pointed through the weird black night—"it stood, Johnnie, about a mile beyond those trees. Quite a small place, built like a church, and provided against all emergencies with a steeple turret at the top. Are you game to wager on it?"

I stood there in the mud and blackness, and felt my heart take a swifter, more nervous note. He seemed so positive about what he said. I felt excitement surge suddenly through my veins. I knew, in that instant, that I was just as eager as he to prove—or shatter—the statement which he had just made.

"Granted there was an inn there in those days," I said, "the chances against its still being there are about a hundred to one! I suppose that didn't occur to you?"

He looked stricken for a moment, then he gave his body a little shake, as a wet dog might.

"We can only go and see," he declared stubbornly. "Come on!" I followed—almost eagerly now. "There's the mound," he said presently, nodding across the sticky marshland. "See it? There's a deep wide ditch on the other side—or there used to be. Two hundred horsemen of the King's army were trapped in that ditch, Johnnie. Not one of them got away to tell the tale."

We passed round the mound—I stopped abruptly, exultation in my heart.

"Where's the ditch?" I cried, pointing. "Where is it?"

I saw the look of genuine mystification which spread instantly across his face. He closed his eyes, as if trying to recollect something.

"Perhaps I made a mistake about the ditch," he admitted, at last. "Everything's dim—fragmentary—naturally." He smiled whimsically. "Probably I rode this way the night of the battle," he added, shrugging. "Perhaps I was one of Cromwell's Ironsides." His eyes opened suddenly and he stared at me almost in terror. "Perhaps," he breathed—"perhaps I was killed here that night. Who knows?"

His words struck something like terror through my own heart. I swung round, splashing past him into the darkness. I suppose I had gone about two hundred yards, then, with startling suddenness, the earth seemed to drop away from beneath me. I fell headlong, with a force that stunned me momentarily. When I picked myself up, I saw David Imklof's face peering down at me. I scrambled up beside him, wet, disgruntled, in something of a futile passion. But David was laughing quietly, in triumph.

"Didn't I tell you there was a ditch somewhere here?" he chuckled. "My lad, your pig-headedness is going to cost you plenty yet! Look! This is the end of the old ditch! The rest of it seems to have been filled in! D'you see?"

Startled beyond mere words, I stared into his face. Something was taking hold of me—gripping me vitally. The night itself, with its weird and stormy lights, the unaccustomed desolation of the place—well, a man would have needed nerves of iron to stand against such suggestiveness. And, above and beyond all that, David Imklof's intense personality—the almost brutal savagery of his strange convictions. I could hear him muttering excitedly to himself in the dark.

"I wonder what led us this way? There must have been some power—some influence—at work. I know I've been here before. Why, the very ground on which I tread seems so familiar—so *close* to me! Of course, most of it is changed, altered in some way, but——" He broke off, came stumbling to my side. "Funny, isn't it?" he asked. "Do you remember that ancestor of mine my mother used to tell us about when we were kids? He was an officer in the King's army at the time of the Civil War. Sir—Sir Geoffrey Shrives! That was his name! I wonder if—if——"

I brushed him roughly aside and plunged by the deep ditch, scrambling up the hillock beyond. David was just behind me when I stopped dead, with a sharp intake of my breath.

"What's that—over there?" I flung at him.

He stared mutely. I sprang past him, down the side of the hillock.

At the bottom of it, bridled and saddled as if ready to plunge off at any instant into the howling night, were two magnificent horses.

Black horses.

It began to pour with rain while we stood there, looking at each other. I was thrilled, rather afraid. The strange, eerie glamour

of the night, the place, and the man beside me, had taken fierce hold of me. A mood of utter recklessness seemed to go surging through me. Suddenly, as if a curtain had been drawn back from across the face of those ominous skies, I felt myself back in the good old days—when masked highwaymen were upon the midnight highways, when beautiful ladies were made to step from their halted coach and trip a graceful step upon the greensward to the shrill plaint of a shepherd's pipe. I—my being, the something in me that for want of a better word I term my inner consciousness—seemed to be swept back, like a swift barque across tumbling seas—to those gay, painted days of timid, wasp-waisted women, of full-blooded men who rode hard, drank hard and fought hard. With a fierce effort, I drove the poignant superstition of the night from my soul.

Whom did the two magnificent black horses belong to? What were they doing, bridled and ready, in such a place, and at such a time? I shouted with the full power of my lungs, but the howl of the wind, which was still rising, completely drowned my voice. The clouds, opening wildly for an instant, drenched us in their ghostly radiance. I stared into David's face. It was alight, eager, passionate. I saw how the scar gleamed between his ear and neck. With a sudden shout, he seized one of the bridles and leapt into the saddle.

"Ride! Ride!" he shouted wildly, and I saw his heels dig suddenly into the satin black flanks.

The horse reared and plunged. Frantically I leapt forward, attempting to grab the bridle rein. But David Imklof jerked it roughly from my hand. Snorting, plunging, foaming, the huge strange steed leapt past me into the night.

"Stop!" I shouted. "Stop, you madman!"

But only the sound of his reckless laughter floated back to me. For an instant, no more, I hesitated. The next I had leapt into the saddle of the second horse and was plunging madly in the wake of David Imklof. I saw the black shape of horse and rider grow out of the night in front. The wind was howling like an army of fiends let loose, the rain struck like a solid sheet against my face as I rode that wild, mad ride behind a wild, mad rider. For of David Imklof's madness I was now fully convinced. I do not mean that I believed him insane in the ordinary meaning of the word, for there was not a saner man who ever lived than David Imklof. By the expression I merely wish to convey the utter and abandoned recklessness of his strange, unusual nature. And I myself—well, had I not just such a mood of madness as David Imklof himself?

I do not know how long, or how far, we rode. But suddenly I heard a frenzied shouting out of the blackness. I drove the black horse forward, pulling him up with a savage jerk of the rein. David Imklof, slouching in the saddle, drenched to the skin even as myself, was nodding and laughing at something before us. I looked. I saw the dark outline of a building of some sort—an inn, I supposed. Yet a strangely shaped inn to boot. Church-like, with a steepled turret at the top—and a sign that swung with many a ghostly creak above the door. Urging my horse still nearer, I read the lettering, faded and dim, *The Passing Pilgrim.*

The memory of David Imklof's words stabbed through me again as I sat there, trembling a little: "In some other life, Johnnie—*in some other life.*"

He sprang from the saddle and began to beat clamorously upon the shut door. Many moments passed without response. Then, high above our heads, a window was flung open. Through the wildness of the night I saw a face peering down upon us—the face of a very old man, wrinkled and worn, with a skin like seamed grey alabaster. Yet, from the whiteness of that face, the two eyes seemed to strike down upon us like living fires, and I realised that the old man was filled with some unnameable terror at our coming. I lifted my voice and shouted lustily through the driving wind and rain.

"Open the door! We're friendly travellers of the highway, old man! Open quickly—or, by the Olympian gods, we drown!"

For an instant the face remained fixedly, then it vanished and I heard the clatter of the woodwork as the window slammed shut again. Impatiently I began to hammer and kick upon the door. It opened suddenly and the old man with the wrinkled white face stared out at us fearfully. I saw the thin lips quiver and made haste to assure him of our good intentions. My words seemed to quiet his fears, for he opened the door wider and allowed us to step inside. It was an old, old place, filled with ghosts and memories of the past, I thought. The old man put some wood into the wide chimney and in the cheerful blaze of light and warmth I stood looking at David Imklof.

" Odd, odd ! " I said. " Thundering odd, old fellow ! "

He shrugged and laughed, and began to draw off some of his wet clothing, placing it near the flaming hearth. The old man brought candles in beautiful silver sconces and placed them on the table. About him, it seemed to me, there was a considerable air of quaintness and charm—and true hospitality. Yet, for the life of me, I could not fathom the reason why he should gaze upon my friend with such bewilderment of expression—such awe, it seemed—such deferential humility and respect.

He asked no questions, but I know he would have given many hours of his life to know our business, whence we had come and whither we were going. I could understand his curiosity.

He put cold meat on the table, vegetables and a green salad, and a bottle of red wine which made one think of cobwebs and dark cellars, of such excellent vintage was it. Then, from a peg on the wall, he took an ancient storm-proof coat and a lantern. We heard him go stumbling out into the pouring night—heard, too, the clashing and scraping of the horses' hooves upon the cobbled yard at the back of the old inn, where several empty stables stood.

" I wonder if we shall be taken up for horse stealing ? " I hazarded. " It was a mad, incomprehensible thing to do ! When I come to think about it sanely——"

But, in such a mood, and in such a place, talk of that description was wasted upon David Imklof. In his scanty underclothes, he sat by the hearth, drinking, smiling at times—as if the situation amused him.

" Do you know, Johnnie," he remarked, at last, " I don't think I've enjoyed myself so utterly since that night you and I were lying out in No Man's Land, watching the star shells and eating black mud ! " He laughed gently. " You look as if you were in the throes of some unimaginable nightmare, Johnnie ! Are you still a pig ? Or are you willing to give me best ? I should imagine you've had proof enough, at any rate ! "

" Proof ? " I growled at him. " Where is it, eh ? There's some simple, silly explanation of the whole thing, I'll wager ! "

He frowned at me. An angry flush spread across his face. He sprang up, contemptuous laughter on his lips.

" What a foolish, obstinate fellow you can be on occasion ! Can you think of any explanation other than the one I've put forward ? Tell me ! "

" No," I retorted, somewhat sullenly, " I can't—at present. But, of course, there *is* an explanation—and probably a very simple one at that. Presently I'll find it ! " I filled my glass with more wine from the bottle on the table. " What must the old fellow think of us ? " I asked. " Two madmen, in tramping kit, riding black horses out of a devilish night ! I wonder he let us in ! "

But David Imklof had not heard those last words. He had walked to the wall behind me. I saw him staring fixedly at a picture which hung there—an old painting of a gay Cavalier with debonair black locks and the devil in his eyes. At first, my glance was casually inquisitive, and then—— I heard the outer door open and the old innkeeper came in, blowing out his ancient lantern and hanging up his storm-proof coat. He went to the door and pushed the heavy iron bolts across it, where the worm-eaten woodwork sprang and quivered against the terrible fury of the night outside. When he turned again, I saw the very odd expression of his seamed and wrinkled face.

" What is it ? " I asked sharply. " Why do you look like that ? "

I saw him give a little start. He laughed nervously as he turned away.

" It—it was nothing much, sir ! Only ——"

" Well ? " I urged him. " Only what ? "

He turned again, and I saw that his eyes were fixed upon the old painting.

" That picture, sir—does it strike you that there is anything strange about it ? "

" The resemblance, do you mean ? " I asked.

He nodded, twisting his hands nervously in the small white apron which he had hastily tied about his middle.

" Yes, sir, that is what I mean. The gentleman in the picture is very like your friend, if I may say so, sir."

I frowned thoughtfully. What the old man had said was perfectly true. That painted Cavalier on the wall had a startling likeness to my bosom friend, David Imklof. Save that, in the painting, the man's hair was long and darker, the mouth hardly so tender——

David turned slowly. For an instant his eyes rested on me with mocking lights in them, then they passed swiftly beyond to the old man.

" Can you tell us who the gentleman was ? " David inquired.

The old man hesitated, looking from me to David. Then, in a low, hushed voice, he answered:

"Yes. He lived in the time of the Civil War, sir, when this part of the country ran red with the blood of many gallant gentlemen. He was an officer in the King's army."

"And—his name?"

"He was called Sir Geoffrey Shrives."

"Ah, I see," said David, so softly that I scarce could catch the whispered words.

There was a little silence, save for the uproar of the storm without. The little inn seemed to rock and quiver. I could hear the torrential rain lashing against the shuttered windows, driving down the wide chimneys. I was glad that we had found shelter.

Again David's eyes flashed their mocking challenge in my direction.

"What an odd coincidence!" I blurted; but somehow the words struck me as exceedingly foolish.

Had not David Imklof told me, out there on the windy marshland, of his ancestor, a King's officer, Sir Geoffrey Shrives by name? Once more, as I sat there in the gleaming candlelight, I grew rather afraid. But David had turned eagerly to the old man.

"Can you tell us what happened to him?"

"He—he was killed, sir—in this very room," replied the old fellow, haltingly.

I had a sensation of being chilled. I sat staring round me at the dark, strange shadows which the candles threw across the walls—and once, as I turned slightly in my seat, I felt my gaze impelled towards the wide, gloomy staircase at the far end of the room. Rather hastily, though I knew not why, I turned again to stare into the friendly fire-flames.

I heard David draw a deep breath. Then, with a quiet laugh, he walked to the fire and stood with his elbow resting on the wide shelf above, his eyes fixed in the flames.

"Would—would you like me to make you up some beds, sirs?" the old innkeeper asked, with hesitation.

David looked up slowly.

"Beds? Oh, no, I don't feel in the mood for sleep—and I scarcely think my friend does, either!" He grinned at me. "Better here by the fire, eh? What do you say, Johnnie?"

"Precisely the same as you do, old man," I said. How could I lie myself down and sleep after such a night of fantastic adventuring?

"Bring another bottle of wine," David ordered. "Draw your seat to the fire. Perhaps you can tell us the story?"

The old innkeeper brought the wine and put it near the fire to warm, taking the chair which David pushed forward into the cheery glow. I edged myself a little nearer also. Somehow I did not like the shadows which cast themselves about the place.

"Are you quite alone here?" I asked, urged by sudden curiosity.

He nodded and smiled at me.

"Ever since my wife died, sir, and that would be near on fifteen years ago now. I don't keep it as an inn these days, for few folk ever come this way, save a motorist or two in the fine weather. No one could hope to get a living out of it," he added, stifling a little sigh.

"Then—I hope you won't think I'm too curious—why do you stay?"

He seemed faintly bewildered by the question and it was a long while before he answered.

"Why do I stay? Well, I hardly know myself, sir—save that *The Passing Pilgrim* belonged to my father and his father before him—and his great-great-grandfather. It seems just the only thing for me to do—to stay here."

I understood.

"Sort of a family inheritance," I remarked clumsily. "But don't you ever feel lonely?"

Before the old man had time to reply, David cut in impatiently:

"Don't bother about my friend! He'll keep plaguing you with absurd questions all night if you let him! Tell me, has the place been pulled about much since those days?"

The old man shook his head gravely.

"No, sir. It is hardly altered at all, I believe."

The words seemed to please my friend. He left the fireplace and began to wander rather aimlessly about the room, staring at the walls, picking up odds and ends, frowning as if he were in very deep thought. Presently he paused.

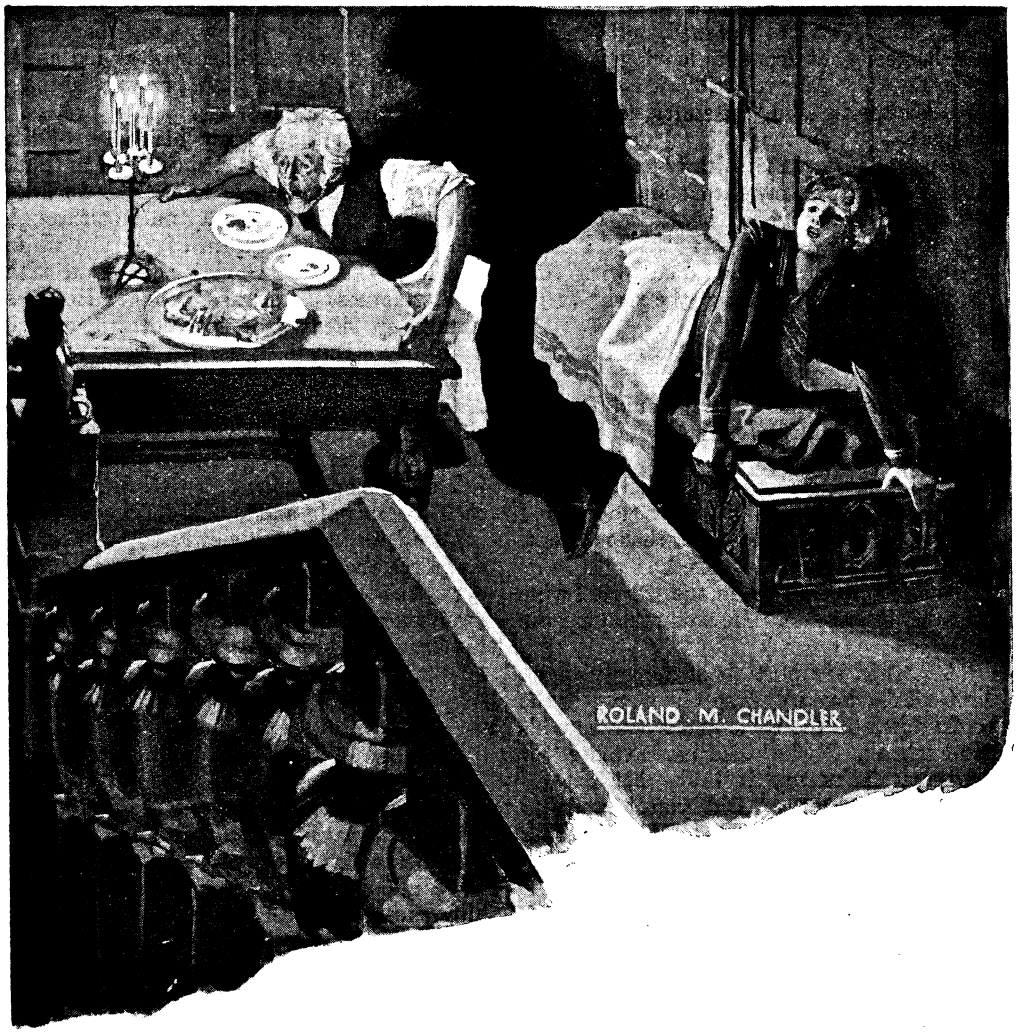
"What are those?" he asked, nodding upward.

I saw the gleam of steel, of crossed rapiers, upon the wall above David's head. The old man rose in silence and took them down, handling them with a strange reverence.

"These, sirs, belonged to Sir Geoffrey



"With a mad cry of triumph, Duval leapt forward, the rapier driving downward."



Shrives. They have hung upon that wall almost from the night he was killed."

David took one of the rapiers and flashed it to and fro in the gleaming light, a peculiar smile on his face. The old man stood watching him.

"That, sir, was the weapon which was used to kill Sir Geoffrey—it was driven through his heart, they say. The other one—the one on the table, sir—belonged to Sir Geoffrey himself. He was a left-handed man."

I stared at the flexible wrist above that flashing, slashing steel. David Imklof had always been left-handed, even as a boy, I remembered.

I heard the beautiful steel clatter suddenly upon the table. David Imklof had swung round. His face, quite suddenly, had become utterly changed. The tenderness, the whimsicality, had entirely left it. The chiselled features had become a mask of livid, frightful hate and fury. With a sudden bound, he reached the bottom of the dim, ghostly staircase, flinging round to stare at us.

"The white-livered cowards! They never gave me—*him*—a chance! Seven of them, all skilled swordsmen—like famished wolves leaping at the throat of a spirited horse!" David's voice rose in a frenzied shout. "He stood upon the staircase—here, in this very spot where I stand now—with a rapier in each hand—while they cursed and snarled at him like mad dogs! Four of them were slain before they managed to drive him from the stairway—sorely, mortally wounded—his clothing cut to

ribbons—but an undaunted smile upon his lips." David's voice softened, and the fury and hatred went from it, leaving it gentle once more. "And so, still with that smile upon his lips, he died," he added, in a hushed whisper.

He came towards us with bowed head. I felt a lump rise in my throat and a choking feeling came over me. I heard the old man say, in a low, quiet way: "Yes, I have heard that was how he died—with four dead men at the bottom of the stairs and a smile upon his lips."

"Yes, I *know*," said David, with beautiful serenity.

I held my tongue. What could I say?

David had walked to the far end of the room. He was looking upward again—and never in my life had I perceived such infinite tenderness in a man's face as I perceived in David Imklof's at that moment.

"Who is that?" he asked.

The old man had taken the warmed wine from the hearthside. He was removing the cork.

"That, sir, is a portrait of the lady whom Sir Geoffrey loved." The old man put the bottle down on the table and I saw how his hand shook. "She died soon after Sir Geoffrey. They say it broke her heart." He turned to me. "Did you happen to pass a large house along the road, sir—rather a gloomy-looking place, surrounded by high brick walls?"

I thought a moment, nodding.

"Why, yes," I agreed, "I think we did, Why do you ask?"

The old man looked towards David as he replied.

"They call it the *Old Moate House*, sir. Young Sir Anthony Duval lives there with his sister. The *Old Moate House* is like *The Passing Pilgrim*, sirs—a family inheritance, as one of you gentlemen remarked just now, for the Lady Eve Duval lived there in the days of the Civil War. Her father was a Roundhead and hated the King and the gentlemen who fought for him. It was the Lady Eve's younger brother who actually killed Sir Geoffrey, I have heard—upon those stairs. You see"—the old man smiled faintly—"it was the Lady Eve Duval whom Sir Geoffrey loved. Sir Geoffrey brought her here one night—and the Duvals followed them. The young lady at the *Old Moate House* is the living image of that portrait, sirs—though a trifle more fair of skin, perhaps. The Lady Dorothy Duval they call her—and a sweeter, more joyous young lady it would be hard to pick on. She and her brother often ride this way together."

He cast a very curious look at me as he finished speaking and I knew he was thinking of the two black horses.

Outside, in the stormy blackness of the night, the wind raged. I shuddered to think of how we should have fared had we been compelled to force our way on foot through the storm. In the gleam of the tall white candles, the scar on David's neck shone with a distinctness almost startling. He was gazing up silently at the portrait of the Lady Eve Duval. His lips were moving slightly, but no sound came from them. I, too, gazed at the portrait. A very beautiful young woman, I judged her to have been—a proud, sensitive, high-strung being, full of fire and spirit; a fitting mate for such a debonair and death-defying gallant.

David walked back slowly to the fire. I could see the quiet gleam of triumph in his eyes, the ghostly satisfaction, which was more suggested than expressed, smiling upon his lips. And I—what might I do or say, or even think? And then, as I sat in still, wondering silence, watching him, he turned to the old man again.

"Wasn't there an underground passage here once?" he asked. "I seem to—to remember——" He flung round and began to stride impatiently up and down the long chamber, a dim, ghostly form in the glimmering candlelight; and then, suddenly, I saw him pause, his head bowed in deep, deep thought. "I have it!" he exclaimed, looking up with a quiet laugh. "It is here—*here*!" He tapped his forehead gently. "It ran from the cellars to a tiny coppice near the open highway—three or four hundred yards beneath the black marsh! Sir Geoffrey made his escape by means of it, did he not? one night when the Roundheads had surrounded the inn—and almost had him like a rat in a trap!"

The old man nodded gravely.

"Yes," he said, "the passage was made from the cellars just beneath this room to a coppice across the marsh. Many people—passing travellers—have asked to see it——"

David snatched the lantern from the wall and put a flame to the wick.

"And, in the very middle of the tunnel, was there not a kind of chamber hollowed in the earth—where Sir Geoffrey and several of his friends hid for many days—while Cromwell's troopers were scouring the countryside for them?"

Without waiting for a reply, he walked to

the wooden ladder set against the trap-door and scrambled down it into the cellar below, the lantern held above his head. I followed him in breathless wonderment, for now—now—— The old man took the lantern and went ahead, David close behind him, his face eager and laughing. It was an eerie journey—the weird yellow lantern-light, the shadows and dark shapes which kept pace with us along the dripping earth walls. And then the passage opened out, and I saw a small chamber-like cavity, with two wooden benches set along the walls and a table between them. In a corner I perceived a small mound.

I suppose the old man saw my intent expression.

"They say that Sir Geoffrey was buried in this chamber," he said, his voice eerily hushed, "beneath that very mound, sirs."

I grabbed at David's arm, for sudden sweating terror seemed to spring upon me.

"Come away!" I said huskily. "Do you hear?"

He came, yet reluctantly. The old man came down the staircase, a bundle in his arms.

"These," he said, putting them upon the table, "are the very garments Sir Geoffrey was wearing on the night he was killed."

David stared at them an instant, then, with a little reckless laugh, he snatched them up and began to attire himself in them. In the candlelight, as he stood fully attired in the brilliant but faded uniform of one of the King's officers, his striking resemblance to the picture on the wall became even more apparent to my eyes. It was as if that picture had been brought to life by the man who stood before me, rapier in hand, plumed hat set rakishly on his head, feet wide apart, laughing defiance in his dark, intense eyes.

And the thought struck me that Sir Geoffrey Shrives himself was in that room, rapier in hand, laughing defiance in his dark, intense eyes.

And then, in that moment of stillness, a thunderous hammering came upon the inn door. I sat motionless, staring at the old man, whose withered form visibly trembled. Who could be abroad on such a filthy night, I wondered?

I flashed a look at David Imklof. His attitude, I thought, had become strangely tense. He stood leaning forward slightly, the gleaming rapier point thrust across his body, his eyes fixed upon the shaking bolts.

"Open the door!" he commanded, looking towards the old man.

I rose to my feet, watching. I do not know why I should have experienced such an uneasy feeling, as if peril lurked out there in the wildness of the night. Reluctantly, with shaking limbs, the old fellow went towards the door. I heard the shrill scream of the rusted bolts being withdrawn. The door flung inward towards us. Wind and rain burst across the room, putting out several of the tall candles, and throwing much of the chamber into black dark. Against the raging tempest, pale and savage, I saw a face. It was the face of a young man, sturdily built, his clothing torn and drenched through with the frightful downpour. His eyes, as he stared wildly in upon us, were like twin fragments of flame. Rage, hate, despair were in them. And in his arms he held the form of a young woman.

It seemed an eternity that we stood there—David Imklof, the old man and myself.

With a queer, strangled cry, the young man came stumbling through the doorway. I could see that he was dreadfully weak from his terrible battle with the storm. He was hatless and there was blood upon his face, where the branch of a tree had torn open the flesh. I saw the old man glide furtively to the door and shut it with a screaming of the bolts. David Imklof had made no movement. Statuesque he seemed, in that strange, dim light—almost unreal. The mocking glitter in his eyes matched the still quiver of the rapier's point, which he still held pointed towards the door.

I sprang towards the young man, taking the drenched, unconscious form from his arms. I carried my beautiful burden to the warmth of the fire, placing it gently upon the low couch, so that the flames lighted vividly the small, sweet face. Never had I looked upon such loveliness, such white divinity.

Yet, almost before I had time to think, the young man flung round upon David, as he stood there.

"My name is Sir Anthony Duval!" he cried passionately. "The lady is my sister! We were caught and trapped by the storm on the marsh! Our horses were stolen! We saw them ridden away into the night as we hurried back—I caught a glimpse of a face as they rode past us—laughing like madmen!" He staggered a pace or two towards David Imklof, his face wild and ashen. "*Your* face it was!" he said, almost screaming the words in his insane fury. "*Yours!* For hours we were left staggering and blown about by the tempest, knowing not where we were! My little sister—I have carried her unconscious for miles—if she dies——"

I saw the anger which flooded David's face. The rapier point elevated slightly, so that it pointed towards Sir Anthony Duval's heart. I made haste to intervene

"We must crave your forgiveness, Sir Anthony," I said, in deep contrition. "What we did was the act of two madmen, as you say. I can offer you no satisfactory explanation of our strange conduct, I fear—save that the wildness of the elements seemed to reduce us to this state of lunacy and—and——" My voice tailed off weakly, for I perceived how utterly foolish such words must appear to him.

Indeed, they had the very opposite effect to the one I desired. With a stifled oath, Sir Anthony leapt at David Imklof. As he sprang past the table, he snatched at the other rapier which lay upon the white cloth. The blades met with a savage clash, twisting and leaping in the dim light like fragments of naked fire. Spellbound by the remarkable spectacle, I stood looking on, my breath caught in my throat. So furious was the young man's attack, so wildly and madly did he make use of his weapon, that David Imklof was immediately forced back towards the great stairway. In such a manner, I thought, had Sir Geoffrey Shrives been driven to the fatal stairway by the wild-faced, hate-mad Duvals—driven splendidly to his death.

Next instant, with a cry of horror, I had leapt forward. David's foot had caught upon the stairway, he was flung upon his back. With a mad cry of triumph, Duval leapt forward, the rapier driving downward. A moment later and the steel would have been buried in David Imklof's heart, had I not caught frantically at Duval's wrist, jerking the steel from his hand.

"You mad young fool!" I shouted fiercely. "Are you out of your senses? That was near to *murder*!"

He looked at me foolishly a moment, his mouth sagged open, and he staggered to the table, gulping wine from a glass.

David rose slowly to his feet, smiling gently. I turned, looking towards the hearth. The young Lady Dorothy's eyes were open. She was gazing fixedly at David Imklof. Their glances seemed, in that still instant, to meet and catch together, as one dark flame might meet and mingle with another. Never, I feel, can I forget the strangeness, the sacred joy of the look which passed between them. It was as if they knew and recognised—as if they had already met and loved before.

I REMEMBER in what a saddened mood I felt when David Imklof and his lovely young bride had departed on their honeymoon to Italy. Never, I knew, could our friendship be quite the same again.

In the snug little rooms we had shared together, in such gay, happy comradeship, I stood a trifle lonely and forlorn. David had asked me to pack his books, his trifles all together, so that they might be ready for removal upon his return. I went about the task in dreary mood. I moved the heavy oak bookcase from the window, so that I might get at its contents more readily. And, as I moved it, a very old book fell with a clatter at my feet. It must have lain behind the case for many years.

I took it between my hands, casually, then with a quickening interest. A red book, it was, with ancient, torn covers, and a print unusually large. I glanced at the title: *The Story of Sir Geoffrey Shrives.*

The truth flashed through my brain.

For was this not the book which David Imklof's mother had read to him so often, so many, many times, on the green lawn close by the old, creeper-covered house, when her gentle eyes had grown dim and she could read only print that was extremely bold and big and clear? The yellowed pages told of Sir Geoffrey Shrives, an officer in the King's army, of his daring deeds, of his stormy love for the beautiful Eve Duval, of the ancient hostelry called *The Passing Pilgrim*, of the battle on the marshland, where part of the King's army was trapped and destroyed in the great ditches; yes, and of how Sir Geoffrey daringly stole his lady-love from the house of Colonel Duval, the Roundhead officer, of how he was pursued and sought refuge in *The Passing Pilgrim*, and of how he was slain at last upon the great dark stairway.

And, as I stood there with the red book in my hand, I thought of that flaming inferno through which I and David Imklof had passed; of how he had saved my life in the blast of shot and shell; of the terrible scar upon his head and neck; of the very odd tricks which his brain had played upon him since; how of some happenings he had a most vivid recollection, yet of others no memory at all.

Yet of my discovery I have never spoken. For has he not said to me, so often: "We were known to each other long ago—long, long ago we had met and loved—and died." Why shatter, needlessly, an illusion so beautiful?



[*Photopress.*

AT WORK.

"JIMMY"

THE RIGHT HON. JAMES H. THOMAS

A PERSONAL STUDY

By WALTER T. ROBERTS

MR. JAMES H. THOMAS is the Lord Privy Seal, and he also holds one of the most important and difficult posts in the Cabinet.

The big outstanding fact about him is that he has been for the greater part of his life a railwaymen's representative.

In 1922 he said of himself: "I have never been anything but a railwayman and a railwayman's representative." He dedicated a small book he wrote, entitled *The Red Light on the Railway,* to "That gallant band of Railwaymen of all grades to whose confidence and help I owe all."

As a young man the wrongs of railwaymen, their bad conditions of employment, their special hardships, vastly greater then than now, filled the soul of the then young engine-cleaner with hot anger, and to his fellow-workers he would declaim against those conditions of work with a passionate vehemence that attracted to him a considerable degree of attention from his fellow-workers.

One who had sometimes heard Mr. Thomas speak in those days said to the writer: "He cut a rather remarkable figure with his pale face, dank matted hair and rugged features. He had a great flow of language, that was often extraordinarily vigorous, and he, beyond doubt, greatly impressed his listeners."

Such was Mr. Thomas in his early days. That phase of his life passed quickly, but it is worth mentioning, for it is beyond doubt that the memory of his own early struggles and hardships as a railway worker, and the hardships of his fellow-workers, profoundly affected him then and afterwards as a labour leader.

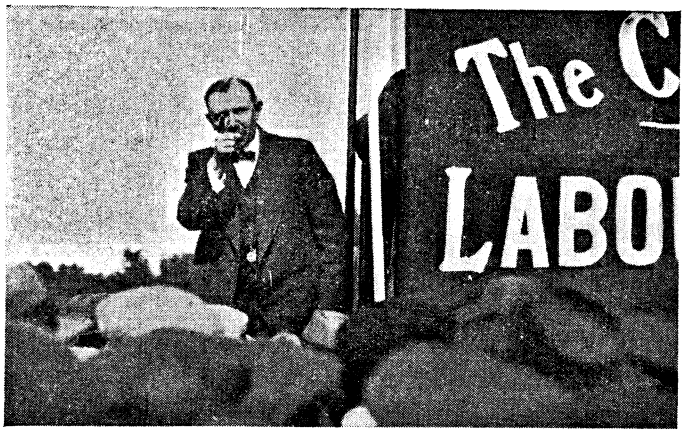
It narrowed his outlook, biased his judgments, and made him sometimes a difficult person even for his own fellow trade unionists to work with.

Railwaymen in particular and the Labour movement in general soon began to become familiar with the name of "Jimmy Thomas." He was only twenty-three when he attended

for the first time the Annual Congress of the then Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, now known as the National Union of Railwaymen.

But it was not until 1911 that the name of James H. Thomas became familiar to the general public. The occasion was the railway strike of that year.

It was an immensely big event in the world of labour; the biggest probably that had occurred up to that time in the history of trade unionism, and the central figure on the labour side was Mr. Thomas.



[*Photopress.*

ADDRESSING A LABOUR MEETING.

He had by then travelled a long way from the position he occupied in the world of labour when he attended his first Labour Congress.

He had entered Parliament; he had grown skilled in the art of negotiation; he had learnt that in a labour dispute there are always and inevitably two views to be considered.

Mr. Thomas, in a Foreword he wrote for Mr. Alcock's book, *Fifty Years of Railway Trade Unionism*, has given an account of that memorable strike which is worth quoting. "How well I remember going down to Liverpool in 1911 and finding things drifting from bad to worse. Groups of men were coming out on strike here and there without any clear conception of what was wanted or when it was going to end; members of one society were adopting one attitude, and members of the other, another.

"My friend T. P. O'Connor, M.P., and I met the Mayor of Liverpool and urged him to intervene with the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, and bring about a meeting to discuss the situation.

"The L & Y. gave a very definite refusal. . . . On that memorable Saturday morning, when the strike was on, Mr. Lloyd George walked into the yard behind the Board of Trade Offices and told me about the mobilisation of the troops, the serious dangers of war with Germany and the delicate situation that had arisen with France over the question of Morocco.

"He pleaded the urgent need of a settlement. I promptly asked him whether he did not think that the railway companies had some responsibility in the matter and why not, therefore, put the same plea he had made to me to the railway managers.

"This seemed to appeal to his Celtic imagination, and within a few hours Sir Guy Granet met us at the Board of Trade, thus conceding for the first time official trade-union recognition. We battled that day to effect a settlement until nearly midnight, and I can well remember a message arriving at the offices of the Board of Trade from King Edward at about 12.15 on Sunday morning asking that I should myself acquaint His Majesty of the situation."

The strike was in due course settled, and the settlement may be said to mark the end of the first epoch in Mr. Thomas's career and the commencement of the second.

From then onwards Mr. Thomas became recognised as one of the most influential and capable leaders of labour in the country. He had shown that in a big crisis he could keep his head, and that, whilst he was a courageous fighter, he was a skilful, patient negotiator, and one who at all times would prefer to gain his ends by negotiation rather than by fighting.

During the war, Mr. Thomas, as the chief spokesman of the railwaymen, was placed in an enormously difficult position.

That he came with credit out of those years is proof that he was a man of great strength of character and considerable capacity for leadership.

To understand the position he occupied, a little explanation is necessary.

At the outbreak of war employers and employees throughout the country came to what was called an Industrial Truce. There were to be no strikes during the war. But

it soon became obvious that such a Truce could not last. Prices began to soar upwards. Something had to be done to enable the railwaymen to get a living wage. The war bonus was devised for this purpose.

The first bonus the railwaymen secured was a five shillings advance in their weekly wages. Then came a succession of demands for further advances. The position of Mr. Thomas was this. He had first of all to meet his own executive committee to determine exactly what the men wanted, and then he had to meet the Government to arrange a settlement. And after every settlement there were men in the railway world who shouted from the house-tops that "Thomas had sold the pass."

On top of that Mr. Thomas had to put up with the most violent abuse from sections of the general public, who saw in him a man who was exploiting the war to secure advantages for the men he represented as a leader of a big trade union. I was present at an open-air recruiting meeting in North London which was addressed by a choleric-looking military man, who said that if he could have his way Mr. Thomas would be put with his back against the wall and a firing party in front of him; "if that were done," said the speaker, "there would be no further troubles, you may bet, from the railwaymen."

Mr. Thomas was present at the meeting; he was himself about to address a recruiting meeting not far off, and the only effect the choleric-looking speaker's reference had was to make him smile good-humouredly.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Thomas throughout the war took up the attitude that a railway strike would be a strike against the whole nation and against the railwaymen who were in the fighting services.

In September, 1918, came the climax to the series of troubles and difficulties Mr. Thomas had encountered as leader of the railwaymen's union.

In the previous April there had been reached a final and complete agreement between the railwaymen's union and the railway executives.

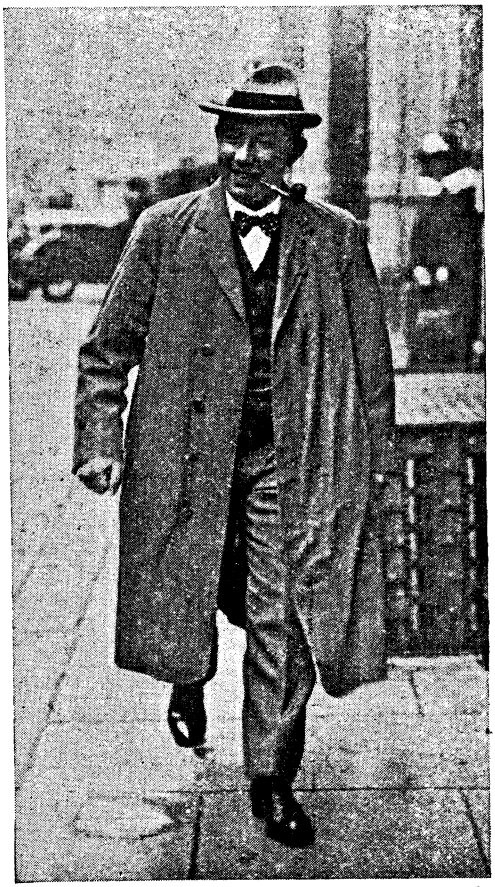
But scarcely had the agreement been signed when trouble among sections of the railwaymen arose. The South Wales railwaymen struck, and Mr. Thomas decided to resign his position as General Secretary of the National Union.

His position at that time was peculiarly trying. He was physically almost prostrate; his eyesight was becoming extremely bad; two of his children were ill, and the nurse who was helping his wife to look after them had herself been stricken with illness. He, himself, got up from a sick-bed to do what he could to stop the Welsh Strike, but was not successful.

On the 26th September, 1918, he wrote to the President and members of the Railwaymen's Executive Committee his letter of resignation. The concluding sentence ran: "In taking farewell of my fellow-members, to whose confidence and help I owe my present position, I can not only express the hope that the Society will continue to prosper, but that the members will realise that, having chosen their leaders, duty and honour demand that their advice should be followed."

Mr. Thomas then took a rest at Bournemouth. Later, he was persuaded to reconsider his resignation and resumed again the general secretaryship.

At the end of the year came the General



[*Topical.*

IN GOOD HUMOUR.

X

Election, at which the Labour Party were almost exterminated. Among the few who held their seats was Mr. James H. Thomas.

From then onwards one may consider him as an individual and as a statesman, but first a passing reference to the railway strike of 1919 is necessary because the settlement may be said to have put the seal on Mr. Thomas's career as a railway representative.

He was subjected at the time to bitter abuse not only from sections of railwaymen but from sections of the public. But the mass of railway workers thought Mr. Thomas deserved some token of their appreciation



[*Topical.*

WITH A NATIVE DANCER IN JOHANNESBURG DURING HIS TOUR AS COLONIAL SECRETARY.

of his long service as their leader. On April 4, 1920, at a gathering in the London Coliseum, the railwaymen presented Mr. Thomas with the title-deeds of his house at Dulwich, and Mrs. Thomas with £500 to assist her in furnishing it.

And now to consider Mr. Thomas other than as a railwaymen's representative.

Intellectually he is not the equal of the Prime Minister or of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Thomas was never a member of the Independent Labour Party, and it will scarcely be denied that it was from the I.L.P. that the Labour Party derived its intellectuals.

Perhaps the most valuable assets Mr. Thomas possesses as a statesman are a remarkable capacity for getting on well with all sorts and conditions of people, a considerable understanding of human nature, and great common sense.

Someone has remarked of him that "poverty and hardship rather spoilt the Thomas of early days, and prosperity and success have possibly tended to spoil the Thomas of later days, for at times they have made him trivial when he ought to have been serious."

How far that criticism may be true, I cannot say; but there is no doubt that Mr. Thomas in these later days of his career has become the subject of some jesting, as a man addicted to the wearing of dress-suits and to smoking cigars.

Jokes of this kind would seem almost naturally to attach themselves to him, though why this should be so it is difficult to say, for Mr. Thomas is by no means the only member of the Labour Party who wears a dress-suit and smokes cigars.

The Prime Minister does both, for example; but there it is, the cartoonists — one especially — have fastened upon Mr. Thomas's dress-suit as a good subject for a joke.

Mr. Thomas, by the way, is not averse to making jokes about himself, especially in after-dinner speeches.

When the Labour Government first came into office, in 1924, Mr. Thomas joined the Cabinet as Secretary of State for the Colonies. Thereafter he was wont to tell funny stories about how people at the Colonial Office used to stop him in the passages and ask where he was going, and what he wanted, and about their considerable surprise when he told those people who he was.

And his jests about Mrs. Thomas's amusement when he told her that he had become Lord Privy Seal are of the same kind.

Mr. Thomas has perhaps rather overdone that kind of jesting at his own expense, but possibly it has served to emphasise a fact of which anyone who knows him well is

aware, namely, that there is a very human side to his disposition.

To many of the older railwaymen he is still "Jimmy," and to them he would never desire to be anything else.

In character and disposition Mr. Thomas differs enormously from Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. They have few tastes in common, yet a closer friendship exists between Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Thomas than exists probably between any other two men in the Cabinet.

Mr. Thomas, despite the stormy periods he has passed through as a Labour leader, has had a singularly happy and fortunate career. His home life has been almost entirely unclouded by sorrow or care, and the happiness of it has been an enormous help to him in his public life. He has made fewer enemies than most public men, and he has a host of friends in all ranks of life.

He has a considerable capacity for appreciating the good things of life. He can enjoy an agreeable dinner-party and be quite amusing in an after-dinner speech. He quite frankly takes the view that a Labour member is as much entitled to go to Ascot or to the Derby as anyone else, and that there is no reason at all why he should not wear a silk hat on such occasions. But no one is probably better aware than Mr. Thomas himself that silk hats and dress-suits will not help him much in the performance of the very difficult task he has undertaken as "Minister of Unemployment."

He was chosen for the post because the Prime Minister believed that if any man could make a success of the post it would be Mr. Thomas.

The same view was taken by the majority of big employers and trade-union leaders. A big employer said to me recently: "No one expects Mr. Thomas to perform the impossible, but no one could possibly understand the job he has undertaken better than he, and I fully believe he will prove that the post specially created for him was worth creating."

One fact about Mr. Thomas is worth noting. He no doubt had ambitions, as every man must have who starts life on the lowest rung of the ladder and achieves success. But Mr. Thomas's ambition has never prompted him to aspire to the highest office in the State, as it might have done had he been less loyal to his leader.

The name of Mr. Thomas was mentioned as a possible first Minister of the Crown after a Labour Government first came into office. What went on at the time behind the scenes among the leaders of the Labour Party only those leaders themselves know, but it is certain that whatever differences of opinion there were Mr. Thomas would have retired from political life if any intrigue to deprive Mr. MacDonald of the leadership had proved successful. To Mr. Thomas there was only one possible leader of the party, and that was the present Prime Minister.

What the future of Mr. Thomas may be is a rather interesting speculation. He is but fifty-five, and one of the youngest men in the Labour Cabinet.

Possibly in the future he may be called to fill the post of First Minister. But a likelier possibility seems to be that when the Labour Party is again in opposition Mr. Thomas may follow the example of other Cabinet Ministers and go into the City. His business capacity is considerable, and the City has vastly bigger rewards to offer to men like Mr. Thomas than political life can give.

OPTIMISM.

CALL not this life a sorrow,
A blur of tears:
To-day the murk—to-morrow
The vista clears.

Call not this death an ending
Of sense and thought:
'Tis but the Potter mending
Cracks Time has brought.

CHARLES JEROME.

THE MAN AT THE WHEEL

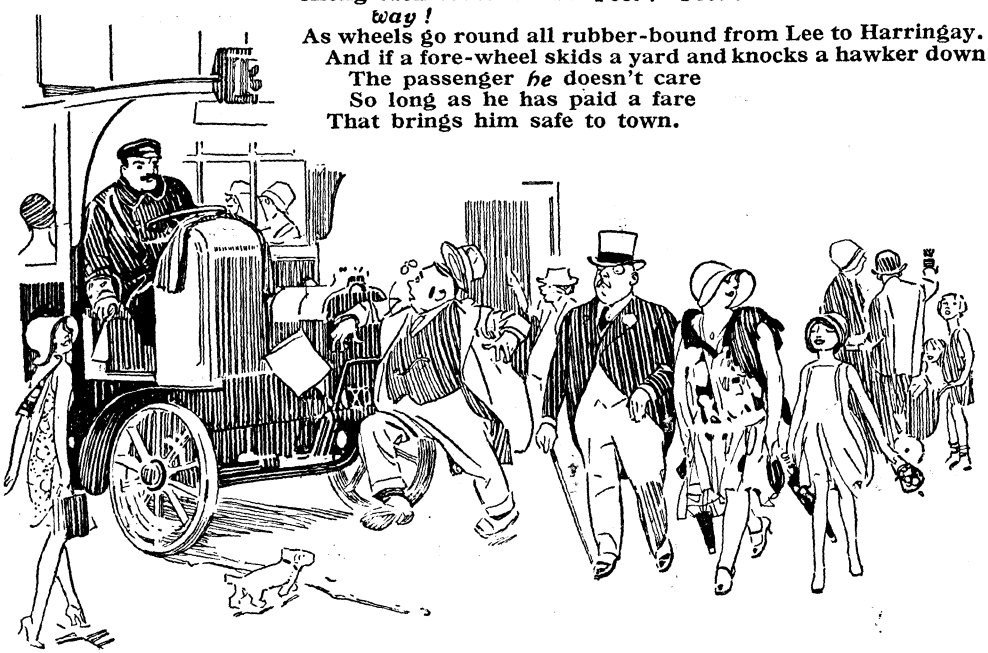
By
ROGER DUNDONALD

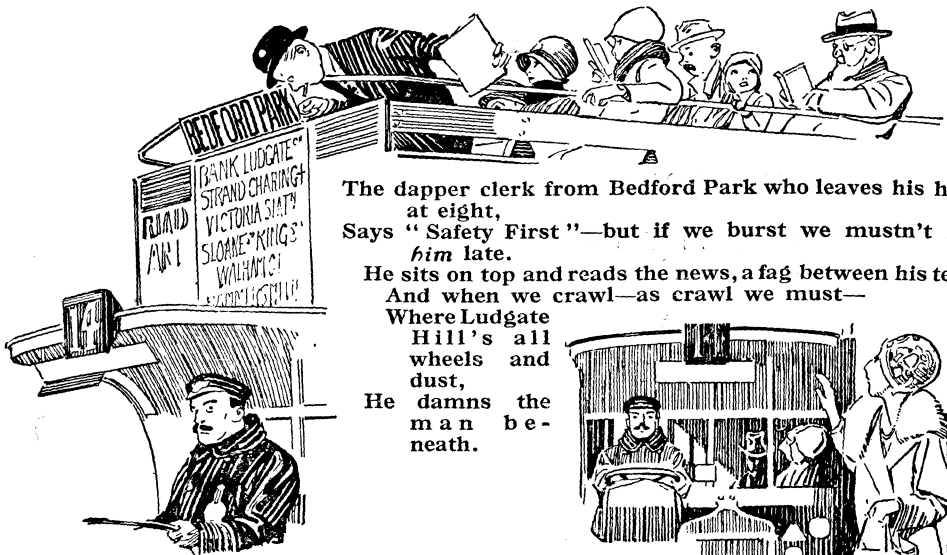
Illustrated by Reginald Cleaver.



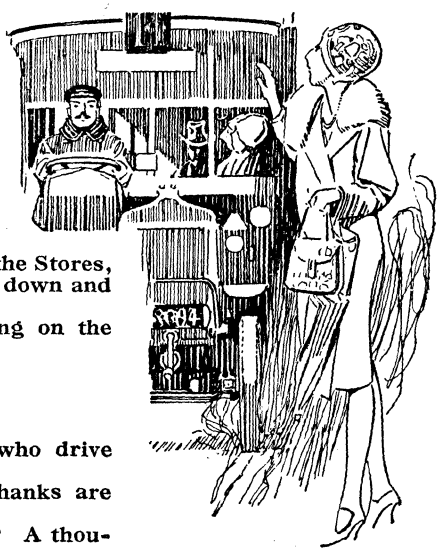
THE men who drive and bring alive their bus-loads into town,
By streets and squares for copper fares and safely set them down,
They get no thanks for steering them without a semaphore
Or signal-bells. Yet tell me who
Is pilot, captain, mate and crew
That brings them safe to shore ?

Along each route it's all *Toot ! Toot ! Be killed or clear a way !*
As wheels go round all rubber-bound from Lee to Harringay.
And if a fore-wheel skids a yard and knocks a hawker down,
The passenger *he* doesn't care
So long as he has paid a fare
That brings him safe to town.



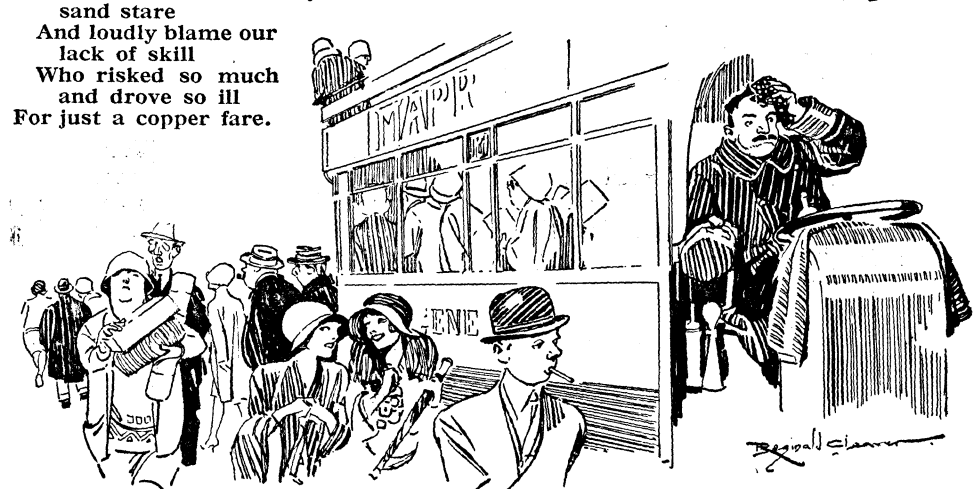


The dapper clerk from Bedford Park who leaves his home at eight,
Says "Safety First"—but if we burst we mustn't land *him* late.
He sits on top and reads the news, a fag between his teeth.
And when we crawl—as crawl we must—
Where Ludgate Hill's all wheels and dust,
He damns the man beneath.



The lady who lives out at Kew and wants to raid the Stores,
But lifts a hand for our command; the bus slows down and snores.
And when she's safe in Kensington and gloating on the stuffs
She little thinks *her* thanks are due
To those who drove her in from Kew
With leather on their cuffs.

But, man or wife, we guard their life, we men who drive the bus;
Where'er they go, from Barnes to Bow, their thanks are due to us.
And do we well? No eyes behold. But ill? A thousand stare
And loudly blame our lack of skill
Who risked so much and drove so ill
For just a copper fare.



IN LAVENDER

By H. W. LEGGETT

ILLUSTRATED BY W. BRYCE HAMILTON

THE rain started at five o'clock. From the window of the sewing-room above Madame Lucille's establishment in the High Street, Ella Chard saw it sweeping along the pavement in furious gusts, sending pedestrians scampering for shelter into shop doors and the covered alleyway between the old gabled houses across the road.

"I'm afraid it's set in for the evening," she observed to Miss Spriggs, who superintended the sewing-girls employed by Madame. "What a nuisance!"

"Nuisance or no nuisance, this costume has got to be finished by six o'clock," Miss Spriggs retorted pointedly. "Miss Leveson is going to wear it for the fancy-dress dance at Conyngham Towers to-night. Madame promised faithfully that it should be there by seven. That means James will have to catch the six-twenty to the Junction."

"Poor James, and him with his rheumatism and all!" Nora Boyle exclaimed. "It's every bit of two miles' walk from the Junction to the Towers, I'm thinking, and on a night like this——"

"Two miles by the road, but it's only three-quarters if you take the short cut," Ella murmured a little absently. She blushed when Miss Spriggs demanded to know what short cut she referred to.

"There can't be any short cut to the Towers unless you go through Sir Robert Moore's place," Miss Spriggs persisted when Ella tried to evade the question. "And that's as plain as the nose on your face."

Whereat Ella blushed still more hotly; for the nose on her face was a delicate subject, being aquiline to a degree and thus spoiling the effect, as she believed, of her otherwise small and quite shapely features.

Her nose Ella had inherited from her great-grandfather, who fought with Nelson at Trafalgar and afterwards became an Admiral. She had inherited little else, for by her father's time the property had become so encumbered by mortgages and liens and a law-suit that hung on and on for years, that the worry and strain of it all carried him to his grave at an early age; while death duties and lawyers' fees swallowed up all that remained except a small settlement which barely supported Ella's mother and two elder sisters in genteel poverty—not to say semi-starvation—in London.

Which explains many things. It explains, for instance, why Ella was employed as a seamstress by Madame Lucille. Also it explains, if you think about it, why she called herself Ella Chard instead of using her full name, Elvira Chard-Conyngham. Finally, it accounts for her knowing of that short cut—which did indeed pass through Sir Robert Moore's property—from the Junction to the Towers.

For until she was fifteen Ella had lived at Conyngham Towers and there was not a square inch of the grounds—nor of the adjacent park belonging to the Baronet—that she had not thoroughly explored.

The short cut existed without a doubt; but Ella could not justify her assertion without revealing what she had promised Mrs. Chard-Conyngham never to reveal when she first announced her intention of earning her own living at the only kind of work she could do—needlework. (Even with this promise, Mrs. Chard-Conyngham was uneasy at Ella's taking employment so near her former home; though, as Ella pointed out, nobody could possibly recognise in her the lanky, pig-tailed schoolgirl who had left Conyngham Towers seven years ago.)

So Ella said meekly:

"I expect I'm mistaken, Miss Spriggs. I expect it is a short cut to somewhere else I'm thinking of." She changed the subject adroitly. "Miss Leveson is very lovely, isn't she? I should like to see her. Perhaps she'll come to Madame for her frocks now."

"Not she," Miss Spriggs declared. "We're good enough to run up a fancy thingummy-jig for her when she's in too much of a hurry

to send to London, but it's Paris and Bond Street she goes to for her gowns. Why shouldn't she, with her father a millionaire ? "

" I wonder she doesn't get married and her with all that money," Nora observed. Nora had the face of a Raphael Madonna and her mind ran much on babies and fumed oak furniture and a certain petty officer in the Navy at present stationed at Hong Kong.

" That'll be the next thing, I shouldn't be surprised," Miss Spriggs said in a voice weighted with significance. " And if I chose to name who it will be, I'm not so sure I should be far out."

But pressed for a definite statement, she hedged.

" I'm not saying she's giving this dance on account of young Rodney Moore being home again ; but this I will say and stand by it. If Miss Leveson married Lieutenant Moore, the County would have to accept her ; which is what all her money hasn't done for her so far. And the Moores are not so well-off that they can afford to turn up their noses at half a million, even if it does come from jam—or was it pickles ? I'll have that reel of black cotton, if you don't mind, Nora."

Nora passed the cotton and ventured to question whether a marriage of convenience ever led to true happiness ; but Ella took no part in the argument that followed and, indeed, heard little of it. Her thoughts had sped back over eight years to the last Christmas holidays before Rodney went to Eton.

A weedy, freckle-faced boy Rodney had been then ; but nobody fleeter of foot nor a surer shot with a catapult nor more fertile in schemes for getting fun and adventure out of life. Ella, who was two years his junior, followed and obeyed him blindly in all things and was more often snubbed than praised for her pains.

Yet she had a will of her own and a sense of justice ; and it was she who forced Rodney to make a clean breast of things when they baited Farmer Hoad's prize bull and the beast charged at them through a hedge and broke its leg by falling into the ditch on the farther side.

Fifty pounds that escapade cost Sir Robert, and but for Rodney's promptness in hurling himself and Ella across the ditch when the bull charged, it might have cost one or other of them their lives. As it was, Rodney went to school minus half his term's pocket-money, and, although Ella sent him a postal order for twelve shillings—which was all she could scrape together—she was uncertain to this day whether he had ever really forgiven her.

For at Easter Rodney went to stay with an aunt and in the summer holidays he brought two school friends home with him who monopolised his attention to the total exclusion of Ella ; and before Christmas came round again, Ella had been sent off to a cheap—a very cheap—convent school in France, where she spent the next five years and learned to do fine needlework—if little else.

Heigho ! What would Rodney say if he could see her now ? Not that there was any likelihood of such a thing happening. If they met in the street the chances were neither would recognise the other. Eight years is a long time—yet not so long that Ella couldn't recall every incident of those last Christmas holidays as clearly as though it had been yesterday ; and find a queer, forlorn pleasure in doing so.

She was brought back with a start to the present when Madame came into the room. Madame was half French and cultivated a violent accent for the benefit of her customers. But to her staff she used plain English unadorned.

" That idiot of a James says his rheumatism is so bad that he could no more walk two miles than he could fly," she observed, " which means that one of you young ladies will have to take Miss Leveson's costume. Nora ! You know the road from the Junction—what's the matter, girl ? "

For Nora was visibly alarmed at the thought of that two-mile walk in the dark to the Towers, not to mention the two-mile walk back to the Junction. Nora would never admit that she believed in ghosts and banshees and goblins, but she never had succeeded in convincing herself that they did not exist.

" I think it's a chill on the liver I've got, the way I'm feeling," she told Madame, " and I meant to go home and to bed. 'Twas a chill on the liver and then getting the soles of his feet wet that took off my father the way he went and him hale and hearty always until then, but for drinking too much whisky."

Madame turned to Ella.

" Then I'll have to get you to go. Now don't tell me you've got a chill on the liver or are afraid of being kidnapped. You'll be home again by eight o'clock——"

"Yes, I'll go," Ella said. She spoke quietly, but in her eyes, hidden from Madame by the thick downcast lashes, there was a gleam that was half eagerness and half dread. It was ghosts she feared too, but not Nora's sort. Yet also she wanted to see the Towers again. It would be like going home—to the only real home she had ever known—no less for the fact that it belonged to strangers now. They might own it, but they could never love it as she loved it. For after all, it is not bricks and mortar that make a home, but associations that the bricks and mortar enshrine and never reveal to a stranger.

"Here's the fare," Madame said, counting out the exact sum, "and James will bring up the waterproof cover for the box. Mind you remember to fetch it back."

RAIN. Torrents of rain.

It beat in Ella's face and down her neck and into her shoes until she looked like a drowned rat. As she turned into the half-mile drive that led to the house, a fiercer gust than usual almost lifted her from her feet and, whisking her hat off, carried it away into the darkness.

It was that furious gust which was responsible for all that followed. For, hatless, breathless and drenched to the skin, Ella was bidden to dry herself in front of the fire in the kitchen before she started back; while the good-natured cook went in search of the housekeeper to see if a hat of some sort could be borrowed for her to return home in.

And so Ella was recognised.

She knew she could not hope to escape recognition as soon as Nanny came bustling into the room. Miss Godlee, Nanny was really; and as housekeeper to the Levesons she was so addressed by everybody from the butler downwards. But to Ella she would always be Nanny—the Nanny on whose broad bosom she had wept—quarts—that time when the gardener's boy executed her favourite doll by chopping off its head with a spade; the Nanny to whose arms she flew when a nursemaid frightened her almost to death with a tale of gypsies who stole young children and would probably steal her and drive her barefooted about the country begging for coppers and beat her unmercifully if she did not collect enough.

Nanny had never failed her in time of need; but equally, Nanny's eyes were sharp and missed little. They were unlikely to miss Ella now.

Yet seemingly they did; for all Nanny said after giving her a long, searching look, was:

"You're wet to the skin, child. Best come to my room and take off your damp things so that they can be dried properly before you go back."

Ella followed her through passages and up stairs and past doors that simply cried out to be opened so that the girl might see how much or how little they differed from her recollection of them; and at length they came to a comfortable chamber on the second floor where a bright log-fire burned and many photographs of herself and her sisters and her parents hung about the walls.

"Take off all those wet clothes, child," Miss Godlee said. "You can wrap yourself up in my dressing-gown and you'll be as warm as toast."

So Ella undressed herself and presently she stood in that state in which Nature had sent her into the world, waiting for Miss Godlee to drape the voluminous dressing-gown about her. But as the girl thrust her arms into the sleeves, Miss Godlee touched with her forefinger the bare flesh in three places and at each place there was a mark that Ella knew of—a mole or a broken vein under the skin, or a tiny scar.

"I was as near certain as makes no odds the moment I set eyes on you," Miss Godlee said, "but now I know without a doubt who you are. Child! Child! And you would have come and gone without asking to see me——"

"But, Nanny, I didn't know you were still here. How should I? I can hardly believe even now it's really you. Nanny! Kiss me. Hug me. Nanny! Are you glad to see me—as glad as I am to see you?"

"Glad is no word for it, child," Nanny said slowly, and then suddenly Ella was in her arms and the two laughing and crying and talking nineteen to the dozen. In the end Ella had to start her story over again right from the beginning, but not until Nanny had had a meal brought in to her on a tray.

By the time Ella had eaten the breast of chicken and the big slice of veal-and-ham pie and the apricot flan with whipped cream and a few hot-house grapes to finish up with, and had taken the edge off Nanny's curiosity, Miss Leveson's guests were beginning to arrive and the housekeeper was called away.

She was gone a long time; and when she returned there came through the open door with her a burst of music and laughter and gay voices from the floor below.

Ella stood up. "It's time for me to go," she said; and if her voice was a little tired and dispirited, is it to be wondered at? "Get me my clothes, Nanny dear. I'm sure they're quite dry by now."

But Nanny did not move. Instead, she looked at Ella long and thoughtfully; and at last she pushed her down into the chair again.

"Sit still and let me think a minute," she said, and as if speaking her thoughts aloud, she added:

"There's half the County here to-night—the half that isn't of much consequence, though Lieutenant Rodney Moore is among them and his cousin from India and Sir Arbuthnot Steele and several others who used to visit here. . . . It wouldn't matter—one more or less in such a crowd and everybody masked, though there aren't many I couldn't put the name to. Seven years—and the poor bairn cut off from her own kind and missing everything——"

"Nanny! What on earth are you talking about?"

"Foolishness," Nanny said shortly. "An old woman's foolish fancies. Yet the frock's there and the shoes and it would be easy enough. . . ."

She straightened her shoulders and her left eyelid twitched as it always did when Nanny was preparing to get her own way against opposition.

"Listen!" she said, "and don't interrupt me, child, until you've heard all I've got in my mind; for I'm not so young as I was, nor able to bear with silly questions out of season when there's things to be done and little time to waste."

And suddenly she lowered her voice and her words came in a swift torrent. . . .

LIEUTENANT RODNEY MOORE—disguised but thinly as a jester, for his height and upright bearing gave him away—was engaged in the fascinating pastime of dallying with a temptation. Already he had danced three times with the girl in the silver-spangled frock and the shoes made entirely of glass beads—Cinderella, he had at once guessed her to represent—and now he was greatly led to ask her for a fourth, feeling confident that his request would be granted.

And that was just the bother.

For a man may dance twice—or even three times—with a girl he has known but an hour; and nothing said. But beyond three the thing is in danger of growing into a habit and may lead Heaven knows where.

And Rodney, although not actually engaged to Miss Leveson, knew that he was expected to become engaged to her very shortly and had fully intended to propose that very night.

Indeed, the match had everything to recommend it. Besides the fortune she would bring him—and only Rodney and his father knew quite how desperately money was needed to keep the estate together—Miss Leveson possessed wit and charm and a voluptuous grace of bearing which, with her dark richness of colouring—effectively set off by the flamboyant gypsy costume she was wearing—made her easily the most striking girl Rodney knew.

If there had been but a touch of romance in his feelings towards her!—a mere hint of tenderness, even weakness, beneath her barbaric beauty, which called to his chivalry, seemed to need his protection! But there wasn't. She wanted him without needing him; and she was not prepared to share him. From the hot gleam he had caught in her eyes just now when he was dancing with Cinderella and her glance fell on the girl, he guessed that already he had offended her and that to repeat the offence would end his chances.

And yet he was tempted to repeat it.

Something had happened to him in the past hour. It had begun to happen during his first dance with Cinderella. They had talked of various matters, but the first sentence she had spoken still echoed in his brain:

"My frock smells of lavender because it was my mother's and it has been put away and forgotten for years and years."

The words were nothing; but the soft cadences of her voice, the shy smile her eyes had given him—eyes deep blue as early violets—had somehow touched him and now he could not get her out of his thoughts.

If he were not so sure that he could never forget eyes like those, he would have sworn, despite the mask, that he knew the girl, had met her before somewhere.

The violins in the orchestra gave out the opening bars of a waltz and Rodney's glance turned at once to the far corner of the room where a moment ago Cinderella



had been standing—alone, seeming to have no friends in the company.

She was no longer there. His eyes swept the room without finding her, but he saw that while he hesitated Miss Leveson had taken another partner. With a shrug, he turned on his heel and strolled from the room out on to the terrace, the rain having stopped and the wind dropped.

There he saw her—Cinderella—leaning against the stone balustrade with a cloak thrown over her shoulders, motionless like a pale statue in the light of a watery moon.

She turned her head quickly as he came and stood beside her and he saw that her eyes were startled and her lower lip inclined to tremble. To pass off the awkwardness of the moment he said lightly :

" Why isn't Cinderella dancing ? It's out of the tradition for her to leave the ballroom before the first stroke of midnight. Think of all the lost time she has to catch up in one evening, poor Cinderella ! "

" Poor Cinderella ! " the girl echoed. " I'm afraid she's not a very good dancer. It's hardly to be expected, seeing how little chance for practice she gets in the kitchen. And it isn't so very easy to dance in glass slippers."

" Then I won't ask you to come back and dance this one with me. We'll stay here and talk—or would you rather sit down ? "

" No, I'd rather stay here. And you must do all the talking. I've nothing to talk about. Tell me—about Miss Leveson. You've known her a long time, haven't you ? "



"From the hot gleam he had caught in her eyes just now when he was dancing with Cinderella and her glance fell on the girl, he guessed that already he had offended her."

"Haven't you?" Rodney countered.

"No. I hardly know her at all. Now they've come here to settle down, I suppose they'll make all sorts of changes in the place."

"I expect so. There's already talk of rebuilding the west wing."

"I prefer it as it is."

"And I. . Jolly times I've had in that old west wing. I used to play there when —when I was a kid. Ages ago, that is, of course."

"Of course," the girl assented, and Rodney gave her a quick glance to see if she were mocking him. But her expression was quite serious and her eyes had a far-away look. "I suppose you were friends with the children who lived here then?"

"There was only one child—a girl. She was younger than I, so of course I used to bully her unmercifully. A decent enough kid, though."

"What a pity she wasn't a boy."

"Oh, I don't know. I liked her most frightfully. The family moved away my first year at school. When I came home at Christmas she'd gone and I've never seen nor heard from her since. I meant to write to her, but I kept putting it off."

"Why was that?"

"You see, I owed her twelve shillings, and somehow whenever I'd managed to save it out of my pocket-money something came along and I had to spend it."

"So you're still in her debt to the amount of twelve shillings!"

"I expect she's forgotten it—ages ago. I expect she's forgotten me—probably married by now. Serves me right."

"What serves you right?"

"I can't get that silly little debt out of my head. It's on my conscience. I ought never to have taken her money—twelve shillings meant much more to her than it did to me, though I'd half my pocket-money for the term stopped and I was fearfully hard-up. What she must have thought of me——"

"I expect the only thing she thought was that twelve shillings wasn't very much and she was sorry it wasn't more."

"That's what she said in her letter when she sent the money. How did you guess——"

"Girls are like that. I—I suppose I was putting myself in her place. If I were friends with somebody I should want to give him all I had if he needed it—and be sorry it wasn't more. I expect this little girl you used to play with never gave the matter another thought after it was over. Only——"

"Yes?"

"She would be rather disappointed afterwards—when you didn't write to her. I expect she watched the post anxiously every day. If she'd gone to live among strangers——"

"They sent her abroad to a convent school. She must have been pretty miserable among a crowd of French girls. I wonder if she did miss me. I missed her—horribly—when the holidays came round. It sounds a silly thing to say, but I think I've been missing her ever since—when I come home, you know. I used to run up a signal flag on the roof—you can just see it over the trees there—and in ten minutes, whatever she was doing, she'd be at our secret meeting-place in a copse below the paddock. You could always depend on her, rain, snow or hail. I haven't known so many fellows you could say that of."

"I wonder—I expect she thought just the same of you. I expect she admired you tremendously."

"Oh, lord, no! There wasn't much to admire in me. I say, I must be boring you horribly!"

"You're not boring me. Tell me some more about the little girl you used to play with. No! Don't tell me about her. Tell me about the things that interest you now. You play polo, don't you, and ride in steeplechases? It must be splendid to be a man."

It was not easy to get him to talk about himself, but by adroit questioning, Cinderella learned a great deal of what she longed to know; while from the open windows above them came the strains of the orchestra playing dance after dance. Three dances they had "sat out" together before the girl thought to ask the time and Rodney pulled out his watch.

"Jove! It's half-past eleven. I'd no idea. It's been so jolly talking to you. If you're sure you haven't been bored——"

"I'm sure."

"In half an hour we shall all unmask. I haven't asked you who you are because I feel sure we've met somewhere before and I've been trying to guess——"

"You wouldn't know me even without my mask."

"We shall see about that."

"You forget. My time ends at the first stroke of midnight."

"Not if I know it. I shan't let you out of my sight——"

Cinderella shook her head slowly.

"The last train leaves the Junction at twelve-fifteen. I mustn't miss it. You see, I'm a real Cinderella—minus the carriage-and-twelve. That is a little matter my fairy godmother overlooked on this occasion."

"Then I shall drive you to the station. I shall be waiting when you come out——"

"Please! You mustn't do that."

"But why?"

"It would spoil everything."

And then, seeing that he was persistent and obstinate, she caught her breath and her hand went to her heart.

"You don't understand," she murmured. "I've no right to be here. I wasn't invited. Miss Leveson doesn't know me. I oughtn't to have come. But I've enjoyed it so much! It's been perfect. All my life I shall remember and be glad and happy in the memory of it. But now it is over. To stay any longer would be to spoil it all—and get somebody else into trouble. Please take me inside now. I must change my shoes——"

"Cinderella! Little Cinderella!" Rodney begged. "Tell me who you are. I can't let you go like this——"

"You must."

The girl took a step forward and then shrank back as voices sounded in a room close by, which led out on to the terrace; among them, Miss Leveson's, angry and a little shrill.

"Goodness knows how she got in. I'm certain she isn't one of my guests. All I hope is the police aren't long in getting here. I've sent for them, and if they're quick they'll catch her as she tries to get out of the grounds. Well, nothing seems to be missing here. I'm afraid it's the coats and handbags she's been attending to. Lucky for me I locked up my jewel-case. Thanks, Sir Arbuthnot. We'll try the morning-room, I think."

Every word was clear and distinct out on the terrace. At first Rodney was merely annoyed at the interruption coming at such an inopportune moment. But while Miss Leveson was still speaking, the import of what she was saying began to dawn on him. And then Sir Arbuthnot Steele's rumbling bass put the matter beyond doubt.

"Cinderella, ha-ha! Very neat. Sudden exit when the clock strikes midnight! Damme, Miss Leveson, the woman's got a sense of humour, whatever her game is. If only she's overlooked my cigar-case——"

The closing of a door cut short the sentence and Rodney swung round.

"I say! The idiots——" he began and broke off when he saw that the girl was no longer beside him. A moment later he caught sight of a white figure flitting across the sunken garden beyond the terrace and making for the thick belt of trees that divided the Towers from the adjacent property.

"The little fool! She'll never find her way through there," he muttered. He started after her, walking quickly, confident that she would have to turn back when she reached the high stone wall that surrounded the park.

But by some strange chance Cinderella had struck the very path that led to a hole in the wall—the hole that Rodney himself had made, and carefully hidden up with bushes, years ago, so that he and the little playmate of his youth could get backwards and forwards, safe from the bothersome inquisition of elders and governesses.

It was not until he reached the spot and discovered the bushes flung aside that Rodney himself remembered it. Then, as he swung himself through the low opening, he saw Cinderella not three yards away, her frock caught up on the branch of a stumpy hawthorn.

He released it for her and for a moment they faced each other in silence. Then Cinderella said appealingly:

"Please! Help me to get away. I've taken nothing. I'm no thief. I swear it."

"Then why not come back——"

"I can't. I can't face them. Listen! Somebody's coming!"

It was true. From where they stood Rodney had a clear view of the drive leading to his own house. Spreading out along it was a party of men, some with lanterns, some with flashlights.

"Dash! Miss Leveson must have sent a message to my father to search the grounds on this side," he muttered. "We shall have to make a rush to the gates."

He caught the girl's arm, but she wrenched it away.

"No! They'll see us," she whispered.

"But there's no other way——"

"Have you forgotten? The Blazed Trail through Hangman Wood and the beech that hangs over the dyke! Then up by the Swamp of Desolation, through the Dragon's Teeth and by the five-acre into

the lane. It's only ten minutes to the Junction from there and I shall just catch my train."

The old short cut!—the nearest way to the village tuckshop and the cottage where Bill Mooney lived and reared ferrets and told yarns of his life aboard a three-masted barque out in the China Seas.

Rodney had not forgotten. In a flood of memories it came back to him—the row there had been about blazing the trees, the arguments he had had with Elvira Chard-Conyngham over the very names that had just come tripping off Cinderella's tongue. For Elvira had always been for pretty names while he had gone for the sombre and the gruesome—and inevitably he had prevailed.

But the marks on the trees would no longer be distinguishable, and the branch by which they had swung themselves across the dyke had no doubt long since broken off—it was rotting eight years ago. And, apart from that——

"Who are you? How do you know——" Rodney began. But Cinderella was already making for the shadow of the hedge, and having reached it, she took to her heels and ran.

A clear dozen yards start she had before Rodney collected his wits sufficiently to follow; and then, for all his long legs, he could not catch up with her.

Skirting the copse where he and Elvira Chard-Conyngham had been wont to meet, her flying feet made for the great oak that marked the beginning of the blazed trail through Hangman Wood. A score of paths led from the right one and under the trees it was impossible to see the old guide-marks, even if they remained. Yet somehow Cinderella found her way through and across the ploughed field beyond to the dyke.

Once she stumbled and he thought she was down; but it was only a moment's check and she was off again. And when he reached the spot he saw her shoe embedded in a clot of soft earth where she had left it sooner than wait to pull it out.

The beech still flung its long twisted arm across the dyke; but surely the girl would not trust herself to it! Rodney cried out a warning as she put up her hands and seemed to be testing her weight upon it; but she paid no attention. In a second or two she had swung herself, hand over hand, half-way across. Then an ominous crack sounded and for a sickening moment Rodney dared not look to see what had happened.

When he did look, the great branch lay sprawling across the dyke, snapped clean off at the trunk. But Cinderella was not beneath it. At the last moment she had jumped clear and now she was picking her way with that same unfaltering instinct of hers across the patch of boggy marshland, beyond which stood the row of pollarded elms they had named the Dragon's Teeth.

"They"—Rodney and Elvira Chard-Conyngham. He knew well enough now who Cinderella was. And a great longing seized him not to let her escape—to catch her and take her in his arms and hold her and keep her against all the world.

But the dyke was between them and there was no way of crossing save by going a quarter of a mile farther up. Yet if she would but wait a few moments while he found a firm spot on the bank, he might jump it—or try, even though a wetting would be the reward of failure. He called out to her:

"Elvira! Ella! Wait! I'm coming."

At the sound of his voice the girl paused for a second, the moonlight shimmering on the silver tissue of her frock. Then as the first stroke of midnight chimed from the tower of Conyngham church, she waved her hand and, turning, continued her flight until she reached the elms and the shadows swallowed her up. And although he called to her again several times, there was no answer.

"AND so Ella Chard returned to the workroom above Madame Lucille's establishment in the High Street; and being a sensible girl, she neither pined nor complained but plied her needle busily and was contented except that sometimes she would make a wrong stitch and have to take it out again because of a mistiness that came into her eyes so that she could not see properly for a few moments. And Lieutenant Rodney Moore was sensible too, knowing that to save the estates he must give up Cinderella and marry a rich girl——"

At this point, Nanny, who was telling the story to her grand-niece, Joan, was interrupted by a wail of anguish from the child and, demanding an explanation, almost collapsed under the weight of a young body which hurled itself on to her lap and flung a pair of slender arms round her neck.

"I know what's coming and I can't bear it," the child sobbed. "I want them to



" In a second or two she had swung herself, hand over hand, half-way across."

marry and live happily ever afterwards as they did in the real story."

"But this is a real story, my dear, and a true one——"

"I don't care whether it's true. I can't bear an unhappy ending. Make it a happy one. Please!"

And she continued to weep until Nanny said in a stern voice to hide her own dismay:

"Dear, dear! What a fuss to make! And who said anything about an unhappy ending? If you'd only let me finish——"

"Then he did find her again?"

"Yes, he found her,, for although he tried to be sensible and think only of his duty to his father and how necessary it was for him to marry Miss Leveson, yet his love for Cinderella was too strong for him. But the way of his finding her——"

"Didn't he pick up the slipper?"

"Certainly! He went back and picked it up after Cinderella had disappeared and put it into his pocket, all muddy as it was. And the slipper was the means of his finding Cinderella herself. For it was a size too big for her and into the toe of it she had stuffed the bill which Madame had sent to Miss Leveson with the costume; and from that he knew where to look for her."

"And when he found her——"

"He did not find her for three weeks; because, when he inquired at the shop for Miss Chard-Conyngham, Madame said she knew no one of that name; and it was not until he thought to bring the bill and show her it that she remembered handing it to Ella Chard to give to Miss Leveson. Then she sent upstairs for the girl to come down. And before Madame and the two assistants in the shop——"

"He tried on the shoe to see if it fitted?"

"No, silly child. You want your stories all alike. He did nothing of the sort. He asked her to go for a ride in his car which was waiting outside, and there he proposed and she accepted him; and a month later they were married in Conyngham church."

The child in her lap sighed blissfully and nestled her head closer against Nanny's shoulder.

"And they lived happily ever after!" she murmured.

"Well, as to that," Nanny retorted, "no man living, nor dead either, was truly good enough for Elvira Chard-Conyngham; and young Rodney was no plaster saint. Yet if he had been she might have loved him less. And I have said that they were poor and half the property went to pay up the mortgages on the other half and there was a great to-do about it all with Sir Robert. Yet as happiness goes, I doubt not they have had their share, and the moral of it all is——"

But whatever moral Nanny may have thought to draw from her tale, it remained unspoken; for glancing down, she saw that Joan was fast asleep.

VISION.

I MET her yesterday, my woodland maid.
All wild, she was, and clothed in russet rags
That flamed at me, and glimmered through the trees.
A sombre, brooding quiet was in her face:
And in her hair the subtlety of tone
That unmatched Autumn flaunts: and in her face
A Thought, unspoken, dark, mysterious.

And as I watched, it seemed as if her shape
Were merged into the glowing copper light
That radiated from the falling leaves.
Her tawny, tangled hair and ragged dress
Were slowly vanishing, till who could say
Which was the foliage, and which the maid?

I met her yesterday; and yet I know
I met her first a thousand years ago.
She left me yesterday; yet I could vow
She will be there a thousand years from now.

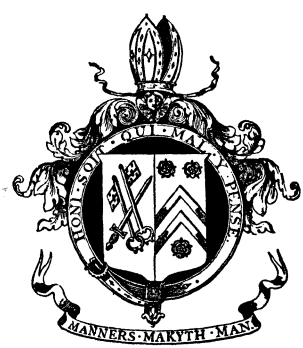
VIOLA CASTANG.

Our Great Public Schools

THEIR TRADITIONS, CUSTOMS & GAMES

By F. A. M. WEBSTER

WINCHESTER COLLEGE



WILLIAM OF WYKEHAM, the founder of New College, Oxford, and of Winchester College, was a man of humble origin who rose to great honours in stirring times.

Crecy had only just been fought and Calais captured when Edward III discovered in this young man of three-and-twenty "another Euclid," brimful of brilliant engineering notions, great at geometry and no mean master of architecture.

Yet the boy's father, John Long of Wickham, was a simple freeman who had married a descendant of Lord Stratton, named Sybil. Their son was born in some humble Hampshire cottage in the year thirteen hundred and twenty-four, and such education as he was given was due to the generosity of Sir John Scures. By the wish of his patron young Wykeham went to Winchester Grammar School, which once stood where Symonds Street and Little Main Street now intersect. There he learned reading, writing, arithmetic, and a little Latin and dialectic, or the scholastic logic of the period.

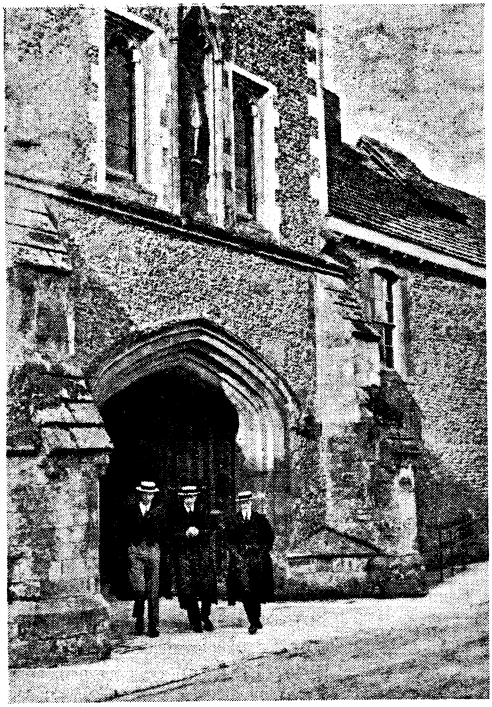
It is said that he was no brilliant scholar and he did not go up to Oxford or Cambridge on leaving school, but became notary to the Constable of Winchester.

One might expect that Edward's notice of him in 1347 would have led to an early expression of royal favour, but the Black Death had come and gone before Wykeham, in 1356, was appointed to the office of King's Clerk and Surveyor in building operations at Henley and Windsor.

That appointment was the first step in Wykeham's meteoric rise to fame. Opportunities were plentiful after the terrible Plague had decimated England, and Wykeham was not slow to seize them.

Within a year his wages of a shilling a day were doubled, and then, for ten years, honours fell thick and fast upon him. On June 12th, 1362, he was ordained a priest and four years later was elevated to the See of Winchester at forty years of age. But his interests were not entirely ecclesiastical, and in 1376, as Chancellor, he was impeached on a charge of embezzlement. For little more than half a year his estates were sequestered and he remained disgraced, but he regained his lands and was restored to royal favour a few days before Edward III died.

Richard II gave back to Wykeham full ecclesiastical status, and in 1389 he again became Chancellor. This seems to have been something of a *beau geste* on the prelate's part to emphasise his rehabilitation, for his interest had long since turned to educational matters, and in 1391 he relinquished public office, for the furtherance of



[*Sport & General.*

OUTER GATE.

those scholastic plans which he prosecuted so vigorously right up to his death in 1404.

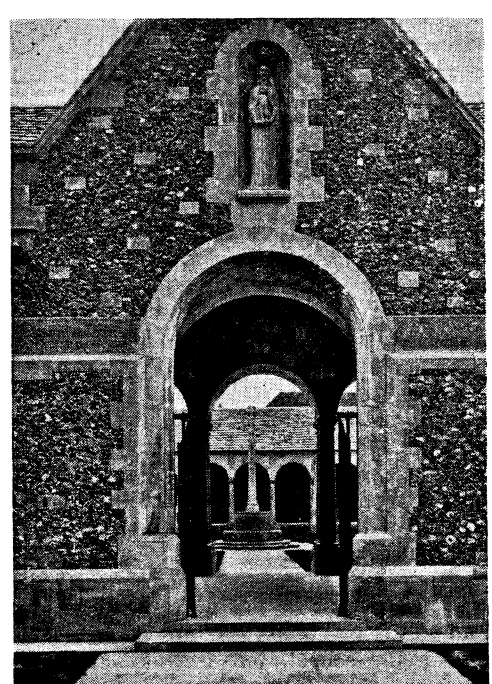
A close study of Wykeham's history seems to suggest that, throughout his career, he felt always the handicap of his own scant education, until the paucity of educational facilities in his age became almost an obsession. The growth of Lollardy proved to this broad-minded Churchman that the power of Rome in England was on the wane; he saw an ill future for the Church without better educational facilities, and he believed that it was better to convert a Lollard than to burn him.

With all these matters present in his mind, Wykeham began buying lands for New College, Oxford, in 1369, and in 1373 he made an agreement with "that reverend and discreet gentleman Master Richard de Herton, scholar" for the teaching in Winchester for a period of ten years of "the poor scholars whom the said Lord Bishop maintains and will continue to maintain at his own expense."

In those days the visitor to Winchester who passed down what is now College Street would have seen a very different aspect. Leaving Kingsgate, he would have found the first of three old cottages fronting him, and, if he turned eastward along the high road, would have passed along with some buildings of St. Swithun's Priory on his right and a little stream upon his left, separating him from the Close wall, until it fell at Floodstock into the larger branch of the Itchen, now called Logie. The "domus" of the Sustern Spital, or Sisters Hospital, connected with the Priory, was set back from the road and formed part of a considerable establishment dating from about 1310. This, with other adjacent property and two fields called Dummer's Mead and Otterburn Mead, made up the estate of about three and a half acres upon which Wykeham decided to build his College of Winchester.

Meanwhile the "poor scholars," receiving instruction from Master Richard de Herton, were housed in the parish of St. John's, outside the East Gate and on the lower slopes of St. Giles's Hill.

Nothing is known of the history of those first Wykehamists beyond the fact that they visited the parish church on Sundays and Feast-days. We do know, however, that by 1378 the restored favourite was beginning to take steps for the establishment of a permanent home for his scholars. For in that year he obtained from Pope Urban VI a papal bull for the foundation of "Seynte



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GATE AND ENTRANCE TO WAR CLOISTER.

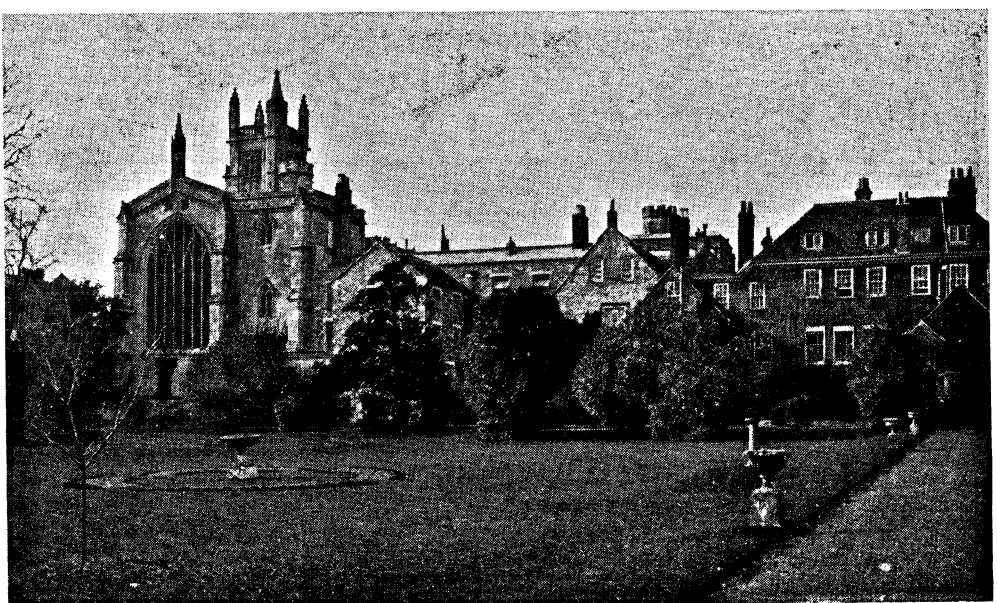
Marie College of Wynchestre," which was to comprise " seventy poor scholars, clerks, to live collegewise and study grammar near the City of Winchester." It was not, however, until two years later that the Bishop of Rochester, upon production of the papal bull, granted the license for the foundation. Royal license for the erection of a college or hall was also obtained, and in October, 1382, the site already referred to was purchased. Thomas de Cranle was appointed Warden and Wykeham's Foundation Charter was drawn up and issued, giving the lands to College to be held in *frankalmoign*, a tenure common to the conveyance of Church property which substituted for the more usual feudal services the saying of masses and prayers for the soul of the benefactor.

The building operations, however, did not begin until March 26th, 1387, with the laying of the foundations of Chamber Court.

Thus was begun the creation of a college like no other in the realm. It lay in peaceful meadows and among pleasant orchards stretching from the little row of cottages in Kingsgate Street to a trout stream, now named Logie, and from the Sustern Spital to the Carmelite Friary. It was in the Soke of Winton, but outside the city walls, beyond the jurisdiction of the mayor, but within that of the bishop, whose great castle at Wolvesey, nearly opposite, afforded it protection.

Seven years and two days were occupied in the erection of the buildings, and Wykeham expended no less than £1,014 8*s.* 3*d.*, which was equivalent to over £20,000 in modern money, before the Warden, preceded by the cross erect and followed by the scholars, made processional entry and took ceremonial possession.

The fact that Wykeham brought considerable personal knowledge and architectural skill to the foundation of Winchester must be held accountable for the circumstance that, although nearly five and half centuries have passed and the buildings have been in parts altered, his original scheme is still held to embody the perfect example of college-planning.



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WINCHESTER COLLEGE.

The original foundation was intended for some 122 persons, in addition to servants, and was to be, as the times required, very largely a self-supporting community, having and using its own stables, slaughter-houses, brewery, bakery, malt-houses and mills. The constitution of the Foundation, according to the final edition of 1400, which is still in the possession of College, was to comprise a Warden, a Headmaster, an Usher who performed the duties of *Hostarius*, or Second Master, three Chaplains or Conducts, three

Clerks—the Singing Men—and Seventy Scholars, in addition to ten Fellows and sixteen Quiristers, who did not come into College for the first half-year but, thereafter, lived in College, to which they were eligible for election, and were educated free in return for the services of making the Fellows' beds and waiting in Hall. It may be added that there are still sixteen Choristers attached to the School, who sing in Choir, and wait in College Hall and receive a free education in return.

Any attempt to draw a picture of Winchester life during the first hundred years of the College must be based upon deduction and the statutes.

Gowns were then, and still are, worn by the scholars, but in the early fifteenth century they reached to the boys' ankles and were stitched half-way up the front and buttoned right up to the throat, while the puffed sleeves were fastened at the wrists. Hoods were attached, but pointed shoes were not permitted, nor might the gowns be black, white, grey or russet brown, lest the scholars be mistaken for the Black Monks of St. Swithun and Hyde Abbey, the Black Friars or the white-gowned Carmelite Friars, or the brown and grey Austin and Franciscan Friars. So that the boys of five hundred odd years ago must have presented a vastly different appearance from the present generation of black-gowned, straw-hatted Wykehamists.

While on the question of costume one may add that present-day Scholars in College wear black sleeveless gowns over black, long-sleeved waistcoats. Boys in Commoners' and Tutors' Houses wear ordinary lounge suits. Grey flannels may not be worn up to books, in Books-chambers, during Toyetime, or in Chapel; they are, however, allowed at morning service on Leave-out Days, but not on Whole Remedies without special permisssion.

All boys wear straw hats all the year round, except on Sundays, when seniors wear silk hats, called "Cathedrals," and tail-coats. Juniors wear "Cathedrals" and Eton jackets.

Then there are Meads Caps, which may be worn only by boys engaged in, or going to or from, games, including cycling, shooting on range, and boating. They may not be worn after Lock-up.

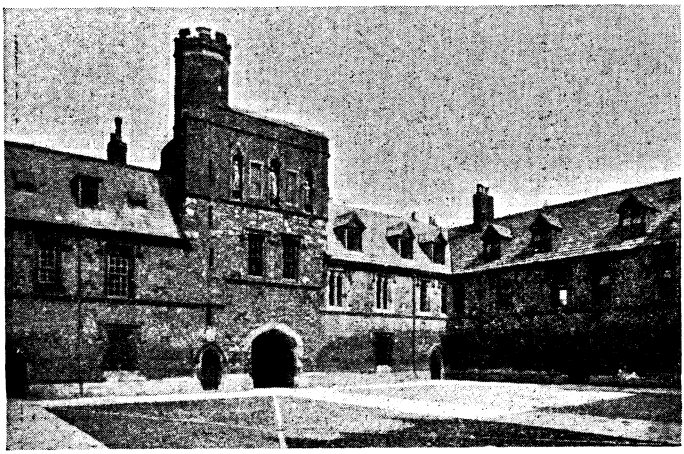
A bowler hat, incidentally, is styled a "Cow-shooter" at Winchester.

In early times the prefects had no power of corporal punishment, but reported misdemeanours to the Headmaster, who "set all right with his four-forked rod." This instrument of correction was known as a "bibling rod."

Later in the history of Winchester it became the custom to correct offenders after morning school. The punishment might comprise what was officially termed a "scourging," but which the boys called a "scrubbing." This consisted of four strokes and was usually administered for failure at lessons; the more severe "bibling," of six strokes, being reserved for more serious offences.

The procedure was for the Head, or Second, Master to call the culprit's name, whereupon the Bible Clerk and *Ostiarius* laid bare a small portion at the bottom of the offender's back and handed the master one of the bibling-rods, a supply of which generally reposed upon a seat to the right of the Headmaster's chair. The master then put on his cap, administered the punishment, threw down the rod and left the room.

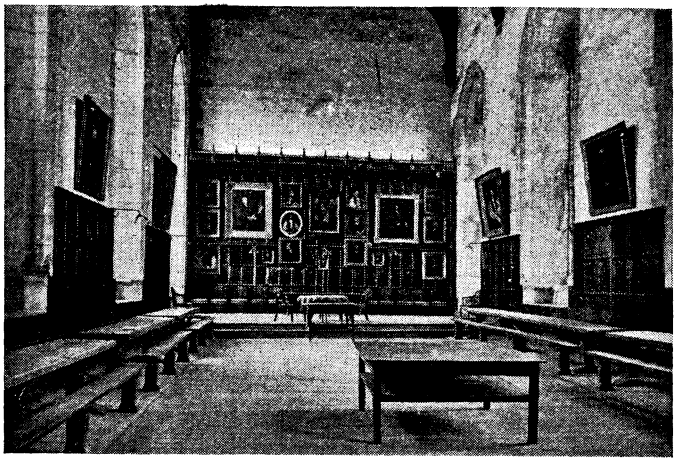
In due course prefects were granted the right of correction, and then "Sixth Chamber Biblers" or "Sixth Chamberings" marked the occasions when Prefect of Hall administered punishment for particularly bad offences. The punishment was so



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CHAMBER COURT.

styled through being administered in Sixth Chamber, where the Prefect of Hall always lived. In relation to punishment it may be noted that "Cut in" meant "to beat on the back with a ground ash," simply "to lick," there being no alternative practice. "Tund" has much the same meaning. "Cropple" means to punish with an imposition, and "Hand-up" is to report to a don, prefect, etc.



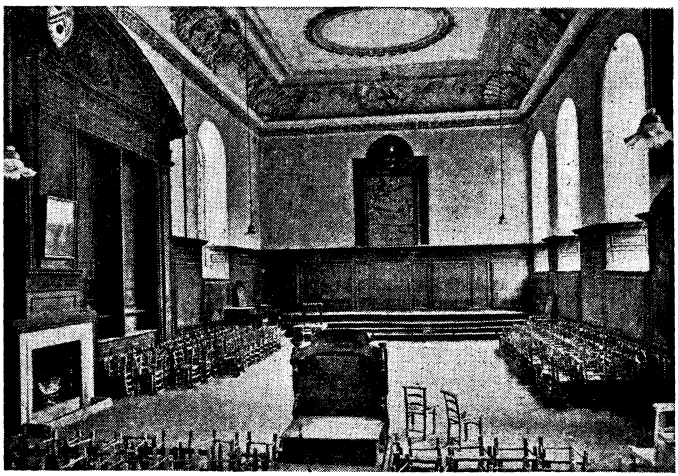
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COLLEGE HALL.

Life at Winchester was extremely Spartan in early times. The day began at 5 a.m., and even earlier on Holy Days, with the singing of a Latin psalm in Chamber Court. After this "the Children," as they were styled, washed themselves and tidied their chambers before proceeding to Chapel at five-thirty. From six until nine they were in School, engaged partly in preparation and partly "up to books."

At first, nine-o'clock breakfast was provided only for boys under sixteen years of age, and not always for them. The fare was bread and beer, and either just before or just after the meal Mass was celebrated in Chapel, right up to the time of the Reformation. Until eleven o'clock there was a further period of preparation of work, which had to be construed "up to books" at the end of the period. At last came noon and a solid meal, for which everyone must have been very ready. It needed to be solid, too, for it had to last the boys until 6 p.m., or even later.

Subsequently "bevers" of bread and beer, as at Eton, were supplied to the "Children" in mid-afternoon during the summer; but, at first, work went right on from one until five o'clock, after which came Vespers. After this service came the mysterious ceremony of "going circum." This was, at first, probably a procession round Cloisters, but towards the end of the eighteenth century the term was applied to the practice of scholars making their private prayers at the benches along the passage between Chapel and Cloisters.



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"SCHOOL."

On the board can be seen the ancient Wykehamist precept, "Manners Makyth Man."

After "going circum" the boys enjoyed their second proper meal of the day, but work was not yet done. They then went to their chambers, where they worked until 8 p.m., and finally ended the long day of drudgery with Compline in Chapel.

The work in chambers was, and still is, called "Toyetime." The following definition appears in the latest edition of Winchester Notions and Rules.

"TOYES, a mugging hall is fitted with small com-

partments, one for each member of the house, which are known as 'Toyes.' Hence 'Toye-time'—the evening hours when men must sit in their toyes to work."

In contradistinction to Toyetime are "Books-chambers," all hours of preparation in College, or "up at House," except Toyetime. The term "Up to books," already used, refers to time spent in school. "Books-lessons" signifies the translation of a classical author. But the word "Books" has several meanings; notably, it is applied to the three steps at each end of "School," and also the steps of the windows below Seventh, on which men sat to say their lessons; to the main divisions of the School, of which Sixth, Fifth and Second, composed only of Quiristers, now remain; to a prize for School-work, hence "to raise books" means to win a prize; and to the highest score at cricket or any other game.

Men and mugging having both been mentioned, it must be explained that, at Winchester, all members of the School are styled "Men," but the word "Mug" means to work, to ornament, or to oil a bat.

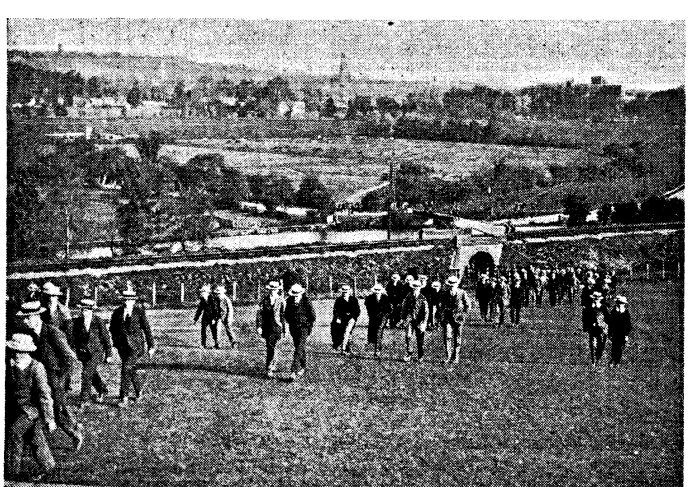
Our consideration of the early life at Winchester, which maintained much of its austerity until fifty odd years ago, has already brought us to the close of a working day, when the tired scholars went to rest among the straw spread upon the sixty-four bedsteads which had been purchased at a cost of a shilling apiece.

Getting up the next morning must have been an unpleasant business, for the boys' ablutions were performed in the icy spring water of Chamber Court conduit, nor was there any protection against inclement weather. In 1837, however, Warden Barter built "Moab," as the wash-house in School Court was called, and laid on water in the chambers.

A hundred years earlier than the erection of Moab the "children" were released from "the servile and foul office of making their own beds and keeping their chambers clean." But how little the régime altered in the space of four hundred odd years is well shown by the writings of Mr. Frederick Gale, who entered Winchester as a Colleger in 1835.

Mr. Gale tells us that in his early days it was the custom at 5.30 a.m. in summer and half an hour later in winter for Rat Williams, a "sweater," or servant, to hammer at every Chamber door in turn until it was opened by the Junior, who had to "rush into" his trousers and put a faggot in the grate and light it. The faggot, incidentally, was lighted with a bundle of twigs called a "bill-brighter." The Junior's next job was to call every boy in his Chamber separately; after that he went out to the conduit, filled the boilers for the prefects and some of the basins, and then he again repaired to Chamber Court with his own washing drawer, which was a sort of oak dressing-case. His next duty was to watch and report the progress of the masters into Chapel, to call the peals of bells, and to see that Prefects were not "Tarde," i.e. late, for Chapel.

"Peals" still survive, as a Junior, known as "Peals Caller," is appointed to wake up men in each "gallery," as Winchester styles its dormitories. The bells are rung for fifteen minutes before Chapel on Sundays and for five minutes on week-days. "Bells go rotten" for the first five minutes on Sundays, when at regular intervals a single bell is tolled three times. "Bells go double" for the second five minutes on Sundays, when six bells are used, and for the first two minutes on week-days, when two bells are rung. "Bells go single" for the last five minutes on Sundays and the last three minutes on week-days, but it is said that



[*Sport & General.*

"GOING ON HILLS."

"Bells go down" when they stop.

There were a good many "brocksters," or bullies, in those days, and young Wykehamists fresh from "Tother" or Preparatory School soon become "pruff," or proof, against pain; but all said and done, the system of "sweating," i.e. fagging, depended very largely upon the natures of the prefects who administered it. Naturally enough, the "thokester," or idler, caught it hot. Juniors in those days were expected to know everything, and it was, perhaps, to save them from unnecessary punishment for ignorance that "Tégés," or "Paters," were invented. Tégé is pronounced "T-J" and is the term applied to the Junior appointed to look after a new man in his first fortnight.



[*Sport & General.*

ROLL CALL.

The Prefect of Hall calling the roll on the summit of St. Catherine's Hill.

Chambers, therefore, like ships, bore a good or a bad name. In chambers the ordinary "man in sweat," or fag, had little to do in the evening, beyond preparing the prefect's "mess," which consisted of tea or coffee and muffins. The "valets," who were the Chamber sweats, and had charge of the "*tu doces*," or tea chests, and other stores, got a good tea for nothing, but made up for this luxury in the morning when they had to carry their masters' books, washing-drawer and other things into School and yet manage somehow to get to Chapel for "Abs," or Call Over. If a boy runs away from Winchester, by that same token, he is said to "Toll Abs."

The system of Prefects' Messes still obtains; such Messes may deposit up to £1 in Common Time and £1 5*s*. in Cloister Time and Short Half for Sunday brewing. It is *non licet* to brew up at House on Whole-School days, and if some prefects wish to brew up at House on Half-Remedies they must share the cost and pay at the time.

Boys are allowed credit accounts at certain shops, subject to the rule that they must be paid at the end of every term. Tradesmen's bills sent in to the Housemaster at the end of the half are styled "Blue Bills."

Before leaving the consideration of life in Chambers something must be said of the old system of lighting. This was effected, prior to the introduction of gas and electric light, by means of functiors, the tallow dips which still light Chambers in College at night. These functiors, which must not be mistaken for "tollies," or candles, are not mentioned in the history of Winchester earlier than the sixteenth century, but it is probable that they have been in use since the days of the foundation.

There is at least one legend to account for the introduction of functure.

One of the prefects, it is said, who had once to sit up late on a winter night to complete a task, ordered a junior to keep his bed warm until he, himself, was ready to occupy it. As it happened, this particular junior's brother had been badly "brocked" by the prefect in question, and, that very night, crept to his tormentor's bed and slew the occupant, only to discover that he had killed his own brother. And, says the legend, it was to prevent any similar mistake being made in future that functure was introduced. A truly naïve suggestion but, one feels, a somewhat unreliable story.

From its very foundation Winchester has been divided into two sects, which are the "Collegers" and the "Commoners." In the first place Wykeham provided for the admission to his College at Winchester of ten "*filii nobilium et valentium personarum et collegio specialiter amicorum.*" But, very soon, the education provided at the College was so eagerly sought after that we begin to hear of yet another class, the *oppidani*, or "town-commoners," known also as *commensales extra collegium*.

The history of Commoners is somewhat chequered. The Long Roll of 1653, which is the earliest known to be in existence, indicates only seven Commoners in College,

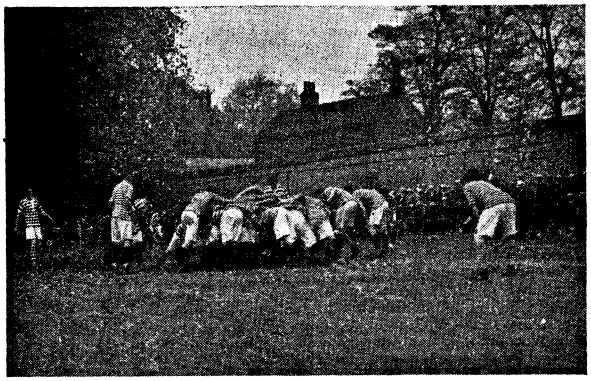
and that of 1690 reveals the fact that of seventy in that year all but two were *oppidani*, and a few years later there was a further falling away, owing to internal dissensions and the spirit of Jacobitism prevailing in the School.

How strong this spirit was at Winchester may be seen from the fact that Lord Elcho, son of the Earl of Wemyss, went straight from Winchester to join the Pretender's army in 1745.

By 1717, meanwhile, the number of Commoners had fallen to twenty, but seven years later Dr. Burton, upon his accession to the headmastership, commenced to put Commoners upon a permanent footing. Up to that time the *Filii Nobilium* seem to have lodged with the Warden, Fellows and Masters, with whom they probably took their meals in College Hall, only meeting the scholars in Chapel and School.

The *oppidani*, on the other hand, lodged in town, especially at St. Elizabeth's College, and, later, in the Sustern Spital, and only mixed with the rest of the School in Chapel and "up to books."

In 1727 Dr. Burton began his reforms by converting several chambers in College for the use of Commoners, and also by altering the Sustern Spital to the needs of his purpose. Thus he established "Old Commoners." Town-Commoners at once began to dwindle in numbers, and in 1809 were finally abolished.



[*H. W. Salmon & Son.*

A WINCHESTER FIFTEEN A SIDE GAME.

Old Commoners, however, was no pleasant place to live in, for the single door dividing Commoners' Court, where most of each day was spent, was only opened to give access to College, Chapel and School, and this dingy quadrangle provided a very unfit place for the boys, who were excluded from Meads, to rest from their labours.

The first Commoners under the new scheme fed in Dr. Burton's dining-hall, where they also did their work in toyetime and bookschambers. Their sleeping accommodation in Wickham's and Cloister and Conduit Galleries was really bad. The space was small, the draughts many, and the rats numerous; the beds practically touched one another and the ceilings were so low that a boy sitting up suddenly was bound to bang his head. And yet for a boy to be "continent," i.e. in the School Sick House, was a comparatively rare happening.

Winchester had gone through many troublous times, notably when Cromwell sacked the city, but spared the beautiful statue of the Virgin and Child which adorns the gateway and the tomb of Wykeham in the Cathedral, in which building the Protector stabled the horses of his cavalry. That he showed such rare clemency was at the direct intercession of Colonels Fiennes and Love—or Lowe—of his army, who were old Wykehamists; but events affecting College even more directly were to arise from the discomforts of Old Commoners.

These were the four school rebellions of



[*Sport & General.*

R. LEIGH WOOD.

This famous Wykehamist broke the South African record for the 440 hurdles.

1793, 1803, 1818, and 1848. The first was said to be due to the boys being forbidden to listen to the band of the Bucks Militia, which used to play in Cathedral Close. The boys put their grievances into good Latin prose and presented them to the Warden. When he took no notice of their protests they informed the masters that they need not trouble themselves to come into school. Dr. Warton, the Headmaster, complied, and Dr. Goddard was met at School door with volleys of missiles and abuse.

Emboldened by the Warden's hasty retreat, the boys seized the porter's keys, burst into School House, and imprisoned Dr. Goddard and one of the Fellows in the dining-room for the night. When the Warden was released he summoned the High Sheriff, but by this time the rebels had possessed themselves of firearms and seemed determined to hold the outer gate, by hurling down flagstones which had been torn up from Chamber Court.

Terms were finally granted by the Warden, but he ignored them, and thirty-five boys were subsequently, in Wykehamical parlance, "firked," or expelled.

The trouble in 1818 may be ascribed directly to discontent in Commoners. The complaints were that no "remedy" had been given for Commoner Speaking, the prefects' privileges had been curtailed and Commoners' liberties encroached.

Again the keys were seized and the boys barricaded themselves in, but were enticed out by promise of a fortnight's holidays. When they rushed up-town, however, it was to find soldiers with fixed bayonets blocking the street. The officer in command was thrown down and then the boys bolted, only to find themselves caught between two fires and forced to surrender.

The term "remedy," used in a preceding paragraph, has relation to holidays. A Whole Remedy is a holiday from all work, except Morning Lines and Toyetime; a Half Remedy is a day without work in the afternoon; and "Remi" means a remission from an hour's work given by a don to his division. On the Headmaster granting a Remedy or Half Remedy to the School he hands a Gold Remedy Ring to the Prefect of Hall, who wears it throughout the day.



[*H. W. Salmon & Son.*

A HOME MATCH: WINCHESTER *v.* ETON.

There is one curious custom at Winchester whereby when a don is a quarter of an hour late his division may go away and are said to "Raise a Shirk."

At Winchester a term is called a "Half." There was originally only two in the year—Short Half (winter) and Long Half (spring and summer). Long Half is now divided into Common Time and Cloister Time. On the last night of Short Half lighted candles are placed in Temples (small niches cut in Meads' wall), and a bonfire is lighted in Meads.

While on the subject of holidays it may be added that there are granted each year two whole holidays in honour of the Founder, one in July, one in December, which are termed "Hatch Thoke." On these holidays a liquor called "Egg Flip" was brewed

in School. Its ingredients are eggs, lemons and beer boiled together, and the concert at which the said liquor was consumed was also known as "Egg Flip."

School must have been a curious place at the beginning of the last century. The Headmaster's chair was set in a corner, and facing him at the other side of the room, which is 78 feet long by 35 feet broad and 32 feet high, was a low seat for the Commoner tutors. The *Hostarius*, or Second Master, was at the other end of the room, similarly faced by Commoner tutors.

Above the benches on the east side was placed the "Tabula Legum." On the south side there were only two windows, most of the space being taken up by a huge bookcase which rose almost to the ceiling.

The body of the hall was occupied by the Commoners' tables and the Collegers' "scobs." The word "scob" derives from the Latin "scabellum," a "cleric's seat," and is not a play on words, as a box spelt backwards. These scobs are worthy some detailed description. Each consisted of a largish wooden box with two lids. The top lid, when raised, formed a screen and the lower one a writing-desk. The interior formed a receptacle for books and many other things. Otherwise the scob was used as a chair, the raised lid serving as a back-rest. Thus they were used, grouped round the fire, for Egg Flip after "Sixes," but ordinarily they remained on the frames provided for them in their appointed positions. The frameworks were, in reality, long benches ranged lengthwise of the room and intersected with cross-benches.

It was customary to arrange the scobs in pairs or squares. The advantage of squares was that prefects possessing more than one scob apiece could achieve greater privacy, while inferiors, each with one scob, preferred the pair arrangement as it permitted of the accommodation of a Commoner friend. Scobs were the special privilege of Collegers; the long tables were provided for the use of Commoners.

As to particular arrangements, it should be noted that the Prefect of Hall's scob was always just to the east of the Headmaster's chair, adjacent to the bibling rods; next him sat the Prefect of Tub, occupying his own pair; then the Prefect of School's square. Beyond the fireplace one of the Prefects of Chapel seems to have occupied an isolated square.

Most of the scobs were provided with coloured "bakers," or cushions, and "bangy," or brown, is said to have been a favourite shade.

Two scobs were provided just inside the door for the two prefect-officials "in course," that is to say, "on duty," who were charged with keeping order in School. These were the Bible Clerk, who also read the lessons in Chapel, and the *Ostiarius*. The former was appointed for the week, the latter only for one day. Scobs are, of course, no longer in use, but the name is still given to a man's play-box.

In 1833, some particularly hideous buildings were added to accommodate the teaching of other subjects besides the classics.

Great changes began to take place in the conduct of the School with the appointment of Dr. Moberly as Headmaster in 1833. Old Commoners was replaced with New Commoners, but this proved in every way a bad building, both from the architectural and sanitary points of view, and an alarming outbreak of fever in 1846 led to the institution of the present system of Tutors' Houses, but the first of these was not opened until 1859.

It may be noted that at that time the most friendly feeling prevailed between College and Commoners, although the latter still lived separately, except in School and Chapel and when the School went to the Cathedral or to St. Catherine's Hill, called "Hills."

The eighteen seniors in College were all prefects and the Prefect of Hall was Head of the School, while in Commoners there were twelve prefects; all others were, and are, termed "Inferiors."

The officers at Winchester are the Five Senior College Prefects, as follows: Prefect of Hall (*Aulae Prae.*), Prefect of Library (*Bib. Prae.*), Prefect of School (*Scholae Prae.*), and two Prefects of Chapel (*Cap. Prae.*).

In times gone by the Prefect of Library was Prefect of Tub, under whose supervision the beef was carved at meal-times, but it is not known how far this office dates back. After dinner it was customary for the Prefect of Tub to bow to the master at the square table in Hall, which was known as the Round Table, after which the tables were cleared and the broken meats cast into the tub. It still stands by the screen, but nothing goes into it nowadays.

One thing only William of Wykeham, who chose for his scholars the admirable precept "Manners Makyth Man," seems to have overlooked in his provisions, and that was the question of their recreation. King

Henry VI for Eton and Yeoman John Lyon for Harrow drew up lists of what games might be played at their Schools, but for Winchester, with its restricted area, there seems to have been no provision. Yet the custom of "going on Hills" is so well recognised and of such ancient standing almost as St. Catherine's Hill itself, that perhaps Wykeham established the custom at the end of the fourteenth century when he founded College.

Winchester, like Eton and Harrow, has its own type of football, which, as elsewhere, developed according to existing local circumstances. The legend that it was first played in a narrow lane between high hedges, thus accounting for "Canvas," is probably fictitious. Much more likely is it that Winchester football commenced on St. Catherine's Hill, where it was certainly played as early as 1647, and where it continued to be played until 1860. In the early days coats may have furnished goals and corner posts, while lines of Inferiors furnished the side boundaries. The number of players was unlimited.



[*F. Frith & Co., Ltd.*

THE TRUSTY SERVANT.

This quaint painting adjoins the College kitchen. The meaning is explained in the following lines:

"A Trusty Servant's portrait would you see,
This Emblematic Figure well survey:
The Porker's Snout—not nice in diet shows.
The Padlock Shut—no secrets he'll disclose.
Patient the Ass—his Master's wrath will bear.
Swiftness in Errand—the Stagg's Feet declare.
Loaded his Left Hand—apt to Labour saith.
The Vest—his Neatness: Open hand his Faith.
Girt with his Sword—his Shield upon his arm,
Himself and Master He'll protect from harm."

Winchester, of course, remained in the atmosphere of the Middle Ages right up to about 1850, but after 1860 "Canvas," of which more anon, was moved from Hills to Meads, which, with the later "Riddings," were to be the true playing-fields for Wykehamists.

The reason the boundary lines of Inferiors were abolished in favour of "Canvas" was because the "jiggish," or clever, juniors found that they could help considerably the side they favoured by judicious "kicking-in," as well as by "backing-up" or shouting.

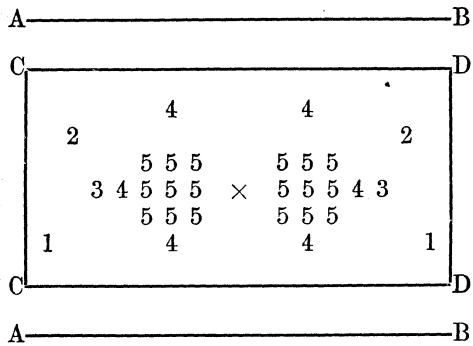
At first an attempt was made to stop the practice by means of posts and ropes, but that did not cure the evil, and in 1843 another expedient was tried: canvas, stretched on wooden frames, was substituted, but that shut out all prospect of the play except from the ends of the ground, and with the move to Meads this too was sacrificed for stout rope-netting on iron frames.

By 1863 the size of the ground had been stabilised at 80 yards long by 27 yards wide. There was still, however, an alteration to be made in "Canvas" when in the early eighties the ropes forming "Canvas" were stretched tight by means of windlasses. This led to the development of "Rope's Play," which is now a peculiar characteristic of Winchester football, comparable only to the famous Wall Game at Eton.

The reason for the size of the pitch is to be found in the size of Meads and the fact that the space in the middle, called "Turf," is sacrosanct to cricket, called "Crockets," the same term serving for a "duck" at the game.

Winchester football is played by fifteen, or by six, a side. It consists of a number of scrums, called "hots." The following sketch shows the positions and gives the styles of the players at the larger game.

In a 15 a side game :—



The figure 1 represents " last behind."
" " 2 " " middle behind."
" " 3 " " second behind."
" " 4 " " hot watchers."
" " 5 " " ups " in the " hot."
The lines AB represent " canvas."
" " CD " " ropes."
" " AA and BB represent " worms."

By the most recent rules slight alterations have been made; there are now 8 up in the " hot " and 4 " hot watchers," somewhat differently arranged; but the formation given above will be the more familiar to Old Wykehamists.

The ground is bounded on either side by netting, 8 feet high, stretched on an iron framework. This is called " Canvas "; inside it there are ropes strained tight at a height of 3 feet. Outside canvas and at right angles to it lines are cut in the turf from end to end of the ground, termed " worms."

The game commences with a " hot " in the centre of the ground, and a goal is scored when the whole ball passes over " worms." A player may kick a goal when he is touching ropes but the ball itself is not under ropes. If a player catches the ball off an opponent before it touches the ground he is entitled to take a run of three steps and " bust." The ball may not be " busted," although caught, if it was in ropes when last kicked, or if it has touched ropes or canvas before being caught, or when caught from a " bust-off " after a goal has been scored. Another rule is that a player may not kick the ball higher than the average height of the shoulder unless the ball when kicked is in the air or clearly moving. The ball must be kicked hard and not dribbled, it must not be held under ropes, and the holding of the player himself on to ropes or canvas is illegal. Handling, or handiwork, as it is called, is permitted in certain given conditions, but these are not such as allow of drop-kicking.

There is also another kind of football played in House-yards which is called " Up Game."

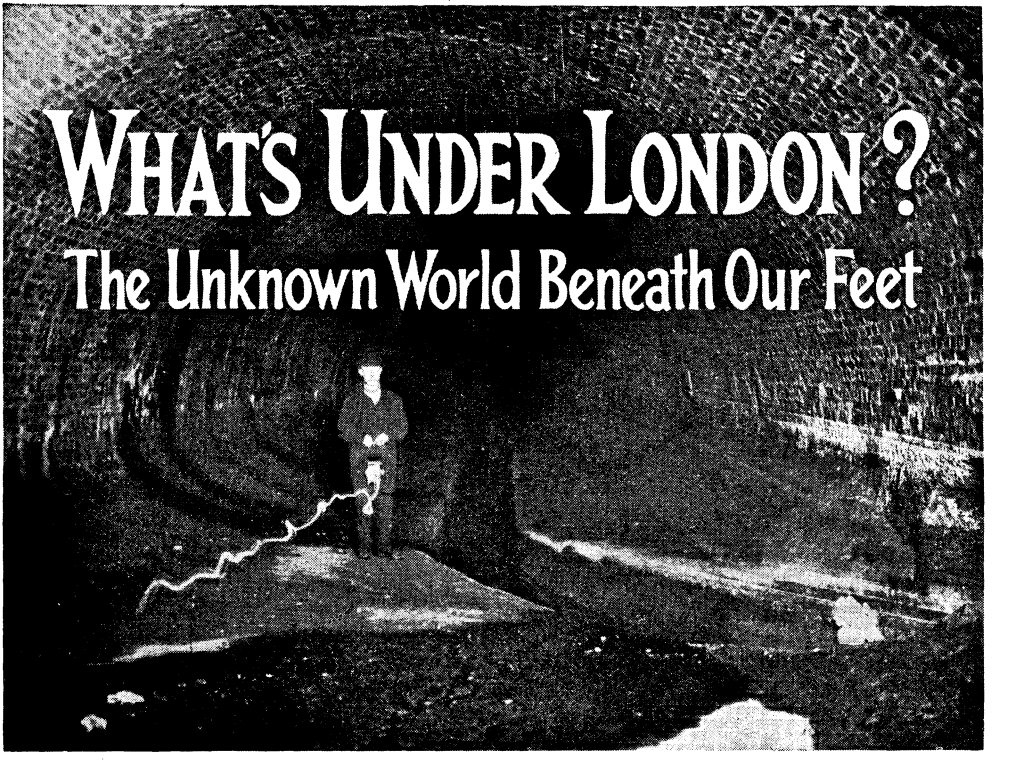
Cricket, of course, is much in favour at Winchester and has its own special terms. Thus, " watch out " is to field; also, in a special sense, of juniors, sweated to field at nets, or to throw back balls into canvas at football. " Tight " means fast, when applied to a bowler; " splice " is to throw; a " ram-rod " is a ball bowled along the ground; " crockets " is either cricket, or a score of 0; and " bartering " is fielding practice.

Of money, the Wykehamist speaks of a five-shilling piece as a " bull "; a weekly allowance of a shilling is " battlings "; if a man is rich he is " bulky," but when he is broke he is " dead brum." " Cargo " is food brought or sent from home; a " baby " is the bundle of unwashed linen which a man takes home at the end of the Half, and his sheets are " straw."

To obtain anything is to " raise " it; i.e. to " raise quills " is to please a person. And there are some quaint personal terms, such as " cud," pretty; " to spot oneself," or to be conceited; to be " spree," or impudent. To " junket " is to gloat, and " pitch up " is the term for one's relatives. " Lobster " is to weep, and " blow " is to blush.

NEXT MONTH—RUGBY SCHOOL.

Back Numbers containing the articles on ETON and HARROW can still be obtained. Later issues will include WESTMINSTER, SHREWSBURY, CLIFTON, and others.



THE GREAT TACHBROOK SEWER.

This was at one time an open barge river. The normal flow is accommodated in the cut in the centre, but in flood time the tide rises in this giant tunnel and discharges into the low level sewer.

By CHAS. J. L. CLARKE

With Photographs by the Author

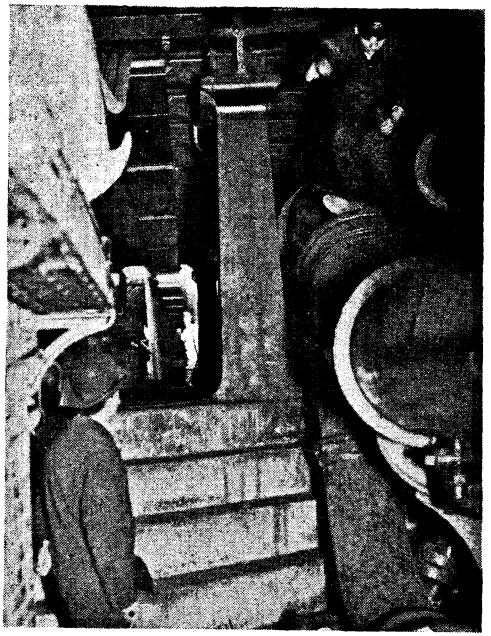
RECENT happenings in the nether realms of our great City have surprised people, and in many cases have created mistrust and alarm.

There have been explosions in cable ducts, extraordinary upheavals from underground, giant gas flames spurting up from the highways, fountains and floods shooting up from buried water mains, and reports and rumours of crumbling foundations of buildings; quite a number of disquieting manifestations that our modern services and conveniences, generally unconsidered by those who enjoy them, entail a marvellous and complicated network of potential trouble under our very feet.

If we consider "what's under London" it is not so surprising that breakdowns, or more correctly breakups, occur: it is more surprising that they are so comparatively infrequent and trivial in their consequence. And what applies to London applies to some extent to all our great cities.

When the metropolis grew so amazingly in wealth and importance in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries such sanitation as existed became totally inadequate, and plague was seldom absent from the crowded area. It was not until 1620 that Sir Hugh Myddelton brought an adequate supply of fresh water to London. To-day the occupier of the smallest tenement is outraged if frost, drought, or other cause prevents an unlimited supply of water being at his disposal, and any lack of efficient sanitary services causes an immediate outcry.

Little by little since the middle of last century pipes have been carried here, tunnels have been made there, rivers which once carried barges and ships, loaded with merchandise, have been buried underground; and imposed on everything else a



IN HOLBORN VIADUCT.

Pipes of great size run through the centre of a large girder which spans the Underground Railway.

vast system of electric cables has sprawled through the earth until we have such a complex network beneath our feet that those charged with keeping up the services of a modern city are puzzled to find a place for any new underground service that may become necessary.

In the aggregate these pipes amount to thousands of miles, to say nothing of other thousands of smaller pipes and cables, sewers and drains, which form the services inside the houses.

Certainly there has been a marked increase of troubles lately, and as most people naturally know more about conditions in the streets than of what is under them, these unpleasant incidents are credited to the new and modern appliances of which we are so justly proud.

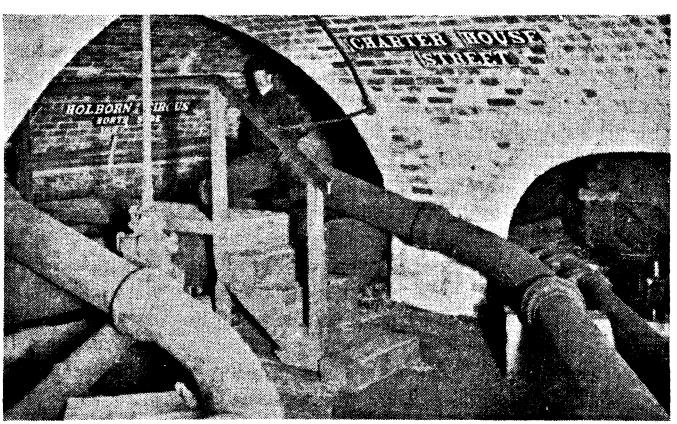
The heavier and speedier motor traffic is the first cause that occurs to most of us for broken pipes underground; our immensely heavier modern buildings, with their necessarily deeper foundations, are credited with a share of the trouble, and then there is the boring of underground railway tubes; but it is doubtful if all of these have played more than a minor part in recent events. On the contrary, it is probable that modern road-making has more than counterbalanced the additional stress on most of our roads; the towering buildings springing up everywhere are generally too few and too isolated to affect the tangle of pipes to a material extent, and the tubes and underground railways are too deep to be important factors in upsetting services comparatively near the surface.

In a way it is all very mysterious, and we get little help from experts in solving the problem.

We may therefore well ask, What IS under London ?

Let us begin at the beginning. A large part of London stands upon what was more or less marshy land, intersected by rivers which have now disappeared from sight, though they still flow in underground tunnels.

The Tachbrook, once a large river rising in the hilly district of Hampstead, is now a blinded and imprisoned giant under the West of London. In dry times it runs in a meagre, sullen little stream through a brick and concrete channel; in flood time it surges in torrents along tunnels, in places large enough to accommodate two lines of traffic; it overflows in hundreds of thousands of gallons a day into prepared storm-relief sewers. As the water passes to lower levels it tumbles over a flight of steps under Sloane Street, forming a great underground waterfall the like of which is not to be seen



BENEATH HOLBORN CIRCUS AND CHARTERHOUSE STREET.

The streets below our feet are named, paved and remarkably clean.

above-ground in all inner London. When the river approaches the Thames a quantity of its surplus water is raised by powerful pumps, which come into action automatically, pouring thousands and thousands of gallons into a relief sewer which carries it away to the great river.

The Tachbrook can be taken as typical of other buried rivers which are now confined beneath the surface level of the streets.

The best known of these is the Fleet River. It used to flow from the hills at Highgate, coming as the Holebourne through the Mount Pleasant district, and giving its name, in a modernised version, to Holborn, and again as the Fleet River giving a name to the famous street of ink. On its eastern bank stood the home of the Black Friars, and on its western slopes the White Friars were established; both are immortalised in our present street names.

The Tybourne and Westbourne, once important waterways, still flow, though they are now buried in darkness under West London, while beneath the very heart of the City, the Wallbrook, close to the banks of which the Mansion House is built, still rises and falls in its underground prison.

These buried rivers are now part of an enormous system of pipes, tubes and tunnels which carry away the storm water from over five hundred square miles of London, and together with the sewers of the great metropolis bear hundreds of millions of gallons of liquid each day.

The land on which London stands abounds in springs; some of them were noted for their medicinal properties, and there is still one in Brixton where "waters" are pumped from the well and can be drunk by those so minded. The Roman Bath in the Strand gets its water from an underground spring, and the large lakes in our parks are partly fed by spring water.

The earth under London is for ever shifting, water working its way about in millions of little trickling courses, undermining a minute area here and carrying away tiny particles there. The cumulative effect of these little tricklings can be better understood when it is realised that a tiny hole one-eighth of an inch in diameter, in a water pipe, the water in which is, of course, under pressure, will pass over ten tons of water a day.

There are thousands of miles of water mains and pipes, the bulk of which are buried in the earth, and although the authorities keep continual watch on supply pipes and connections, and turn out with a promptitude equal to that of the fire brigade to repair defects, the escape of water is considerable, and plays a part in undermining the surface crust.



A CITY CORPORATION SUBWAY.

This is paved and has a light railway on which workmen can push a trolley with tools and material. It contains service pipes and cables to supply sections of the City of London.

One expert suggests that marsh gas may rise from decaying matter in the swampy areas. Then there is an enormous quantity of waste petrol discharged into sewers and poured out on the ground, added to which storage tanks are liable to leak or become damaged; it is said that 300 cubic feet of gas escapes daily, from each mile of mains. This sounds alarming to the ordinary citizen, but spread over a vast area it does not matter much; the danger would be in



SUBWAY BENEATH HOLBORN VIADUCT.

The iron pans are to catch drippings from the ventilation shafts in the footway above.

allowing an accumulation of gas at any particular spot.

The extensive use of petrol for transport purposes is an appreciable risk, as under favourable conditions a small quantity of spirit can cause a shattering explosion.

Under London there is a nether city of subways and tunnels many miles in length, which accommodate service pipes and cables. Many of these underground passages are miniature streets, kept as clean and trim as the streets above; some have even little tramway lines running through them, on which trolleys for workmen's tools and material can travel.

Several underground streets bear name-plates corresponding with the streets above. Men walk along Holborn Viaduct underground in the same way as the ordinary mortal walks along Holborn Viaduct above-ground. Workmen make their way through the centre of giant girders and climb flights of steps in this marvellous underworld, where 48-inch pipes, said to be the largest in the world, and every other size of pipe and cable, are carried along the sides of the subways.

Like the underground railways, these subways are up-to-date in construction and the services are subjected to continual inspection and supervision. They are all efficiently ventilated and bear a large share in the work of bringing our modern conveniences to us.

If we set about to build a new city we can bring all we need and take away all we do not require without appreciable risk or trouble, but London is an ancient city and has to suffer the penalties of its constant growth.

Thousands of miles of mains and tens of thousands of miles of pipes are simply buried in the earth. A great many of them have not seen daylight for perhaps as long as half a century. It is impossible to keep digging a pipe up and having a look at it, as some amateur gardeners do with their seeds. Time has been at work on many

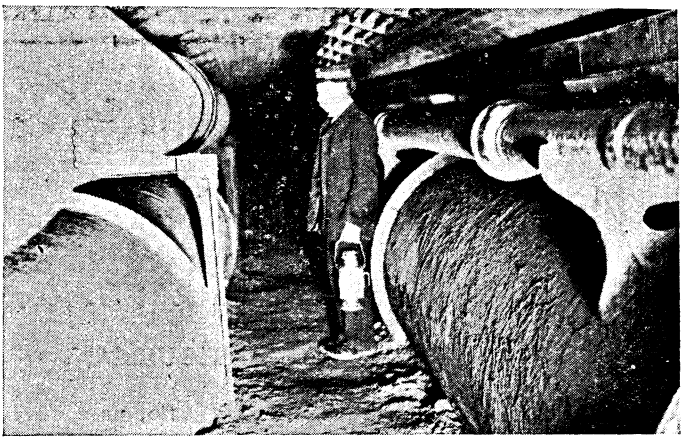


A SUBTERRANEAN WATERFALL.

In the westerly part of London's nether world there is a magnificent waterfall where storm water rushes in cascades over a flight of stone steps.

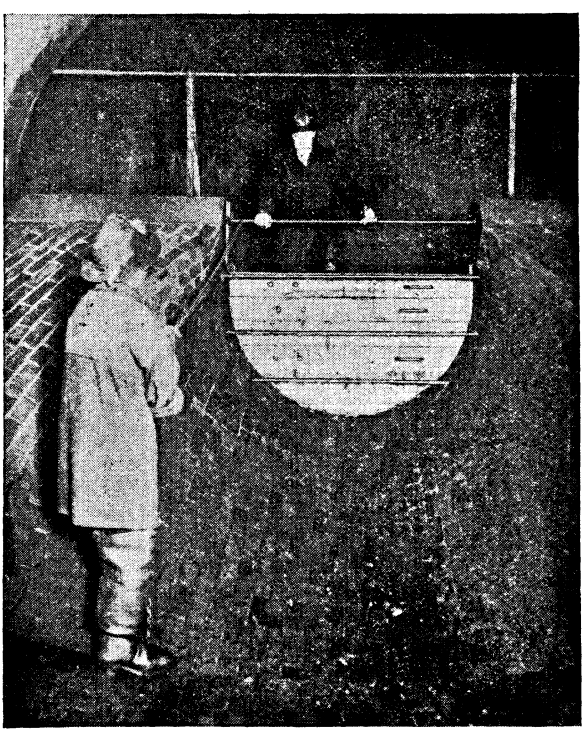
of the buried pipes, eating here, corroding and disintegrating there, washing the earth away at this spot, leaving a pipe without proper support, tampering with a joint at this place, decaying an insulation or a connection at that.

The authorities and the supply companies know all this and keep continual watch, making never-ending tests and readings to assure themselves that everything is working properly. The difficulty is that it is impossible to inspect buried communications, and so long as these serve their purpose no one thinks of digging them up, and it is only when some defect becomes evident that worn or damaged material is replaced.



SOME OF THE LARGEST MAINS IN THE WORLD.

They are four feet in diameter and run in a tunnel in the East of London.



AN OVERSHOT STORM RELIEF IN BAYSWATER.

The man above is seen standing in the river Tachbrook. A storm causes an enormous flow of water over the iron gate. The man on the left is climbing, by means of a chain, the steep and slippery ascent, down which the flood pours.

As a rule defects are detected or declare themselves by some minor disruption, and little damage is done.

As we have constant transition above-ground, larger and better buildings and roads replacing time-worn and out-of-date constructions, so in the marvellous nether world beneath the City old methods and aged material are, all the time, being replaced with more up-to-date appliances.

Possibly there is still some leeway from the years of the War, when little or nothing could be done, but there is no reason to believe that the intricate mass of pipes, cables, tunnels and tubes which spread like a giant underground spider's web will be a more serious menace in the future to London and its inhabitants than they have been in the past, although new and additional services will add to the complexity of underground London, and the increasing age of the old services makes it probable that minor disruptions will become a more usual feature of our everyday life.

A HEART OF STONE

(A Lesson from Ancient Greece).

By LAURENCE HOUSMAN.



YOUNG Master Sisyphus, I fear,
Was what is called a profiteer;
At school he had the saving sense
For making shillings out of pence.

With pocket-money to invest,
He loaned it out at interest—
So much a week: nor was content
With less than twenty-five per cent.

Thus, making money all the day,
He never stopped for sport or play;
He did not run, he did not shout,
He did not bowl a hoop about.

Passing one day a blind man's tin,
Which said, "*Please, put a copper in!*"
Alas! so callous had he grown—
Asked for a coin, he gave a stone!

His good Papa, perceiving this
Sad proof of morals gone amiss,
Sought how in practice he might preach
A lesson such a mind to reach;

So, next day, for his very own,
Gave Sisyphus a ball of stone,
Saying, "Make that hop off the ground
Three times, and you shall have a pound!

"The lessons to be learned from life
Cannot be learned except with strife,
So take this ball of stone for test:
Extract from it an interest!"

The ball was ponderous and large,
A monstrous thing to take in charge;
So big—as Sisyphus found out—
That it was hard to push about.

Had hundred-weights but been an ounce,
He might perhaps have made it bounce,
Hop, skip, and skim along the ground,
And thus have earned the promised pound.





S.G. Hulme Beaman



But as the thing weighed half a ton,
It could not be so simply done;
And many ways his mind he turned
On how that pound was to be earned.

Now he had heard his elders say:
"Where there's a will there is a way."
And knowing that what they say is true
He hit on the best thing to do.



Behind the house there stood a hill
Of steep ascent: it does so still.
Thought Sisyphus, "My ball would hop,
If I could get it to the top.

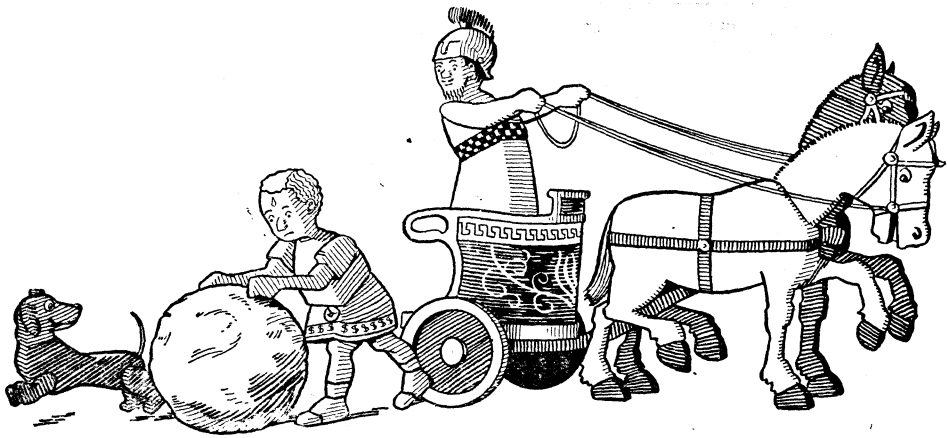
"For then I need not lift and throw,
But only loose and let it go;
And I shall see it down the slope
Go bounding like an antelope."

So up the hill, with many a groan,
Perspiringly he pushed his stone;
Till, losing balance at the top,
It lurched, and gave a backward hop;

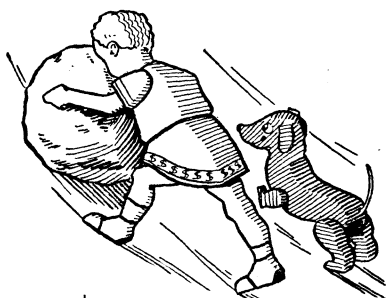


And slipping from his tired control,
It started on the downward roll:
Another moment—bolt from blue!—
And Sisyphus goes rolling too.

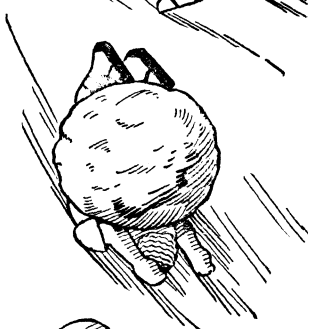
S.G.H.B.



The stone, with that for added zest,
Now takes from life an interest;
And round and round its ample shape
It winds him like a piece of tape.



If you have ever seen the cook
Make pastry, then you know the look—
How it gets turned from thick to thin
With poundings from the rolling pin.

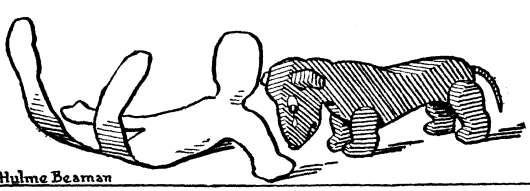


While Providence provides the crust,
Of humble-pie he bites the dust:
Now round, now over, now below,
It rolls him like a piece of dough.

Though two and two sometimes make four,
Poor Sisyphus' remains make more,
When, like a long addition sum,
There, at the bottom, they lie dumb.



His wise Papa comes on the scene,
And says, "You see now what I mean!"
But Sisyphus has passed the test,
And takes no further interest.



S.G.Hulme Beaman



"A woman lay in bed. She was asleep or unconscious."

THE WEDDING RING

By H. C. BAILEY

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

ON a winter afternoon Mr. Fortune came back from a triumphant row with a physician over a culture of bacteria to be told that a doctor had called to see him. Few doctors do so without appointment. This one had startled Edith, the parlourmaid, by desiring to wait for the unknown moment of Mr. Fortune's return. He had been waiting a couple of hours. He gave the name of Dr. Marshall, and said Mr. Fortune would not know him, but his affair was urgent. In the opinion of Edith he was a foreigner.

"All right. Bring him along," said Reggie, and turned into his consulting-room.

The next moment Edith came fluttering: "He's not in here, sir. He must have gone."

"Well, well," Reggie sighed. "Has the silver gone too?" And Edith fled.

But the doctor had stolen nothing. It was to be inferred that, despairing of seeing Mr. Fortune, he had resolved to take his urgent affair to another authority. Reggie delivered a mild homily on the responsibility of parlourmaids for unknown visitors and sat down to write letters. The gloom of a December night closed upon Wimpole Street.

It was an hour later when Edith disturbed him. "A lady, sir. She says she's Dr. Marshall's wife, Madame Marshall. She

asked if he'd been here and wants to see you."

"You told her he had been?" Reggie frowned.

"No, sir, I didn't," Edith reproved him with conscious virtue. "I said I'd inquire."

"Oh, yes. That's right. I'll see her."

A slim dark woman tripped in. "Mr. Fortune? I am Madame Marchal." She pronounced it as a French word. Reggie murmured that he hadn't the honour—"But you know my husband, Dr. Marchal."

"Do I?" Reggie contemplated her with half-shut eyes. She was young but many years more than a girl. A sharp, knowing face. She was excited but quite sure of herself. Not English, possibly French. Not too well off. Discreet dark clothes. Like a secretary or superior clerk. But she had a wedding ring all right. It showed as she twisted her bare hands.

"He's been with you this afternoon. You've seen him," she cried.

Reggie shook his head. Reggie smiled. "I'm afraid this won't do, you know. I'm a medical man. I can't tell you whether anybody has been to consult me or not."

"But I am his wife, Mr. Fortune."

"Quite. Naturally you have his confidence," Reggie bowed.

"His confidence? Oh, yes. Perfectly. I know that he desired to consult you." Large dark eyes gazed at Reggie with tragic intensity. "Mr. Fortune! He came to you this afternoon and he is not returned to me."

"My dear lady," Reggie smiled, "are you suggesting that I have made away with your husband? If you think that you should apply to the police."

"Oh, heaven! Why are you so cruel with me? I am distracted. My poor husband, he is lost, he is vanished! Mr. Fortune—did you see anything strange in him? What did he say to you? What did you advise him?"

"Oh, my dear lady! If you knew he wanted to talk to me, of course you know what he wanted to say."

"I know, of course!" she cried. "It was—it was an affair of science. But look! He has vanished. What has happened? What did you tell him to do?"

And again Reggie shook his head. "Oh, no. No. If I had given professional advice to a man, I shouldn't be able to say what it was."

"Oh, you are cruel. It is my husband, and I want to know why he has not come back to me, what has become of him."

"Yes. Yes. Quite natural." Reggie contemplated her with closing eyes. "But you can't get the answer from me."

"You will not help me?" she cried. "That is brutal! Ah, I waste my time with you." She whirled to the door.

"When you want help the police are always anxious to oblige," said Reggie, and followed her out. She stopped and looked back at him. "Allow me," Reggie murmured, and opened the street door.

She ran out to a waiting taxi. "Go on. Go back," she cried to the driver, and got in quickly. The taxi turned and Reggie saw a man inside.

He went back to his room with a mild curiosity as to what it was all about. Madame Marchal seemed to him generally and in detail unsatisfactory. But at this stage he had no other opinion: he could not make any sense of things. This he considers a sad proof of his lack of insight. The simple nature of the case should have been already clear.

He dined at home and alone, for his wife was in the country, and after dinner went on with his letters. It was late when he had finished and he took them out himself to catch the last post. The night was dark and murky. As he came to the pillar-box he felt men hurrying behind him. He stepped aside and the blow of a sandbag swished by his head, another hit his side and sent him staggering against the railings of an area: he found the gate in them, and as the sandbags struck again he went through, struck again as he went, and fell and rolled down the steps to the kitchen door. He made much noise.

Where he fell he lay. The assailants did not follow him. They looked through the railings, they muttered together, they vanished hastily. The kitchen door was opening. A belt of light came into the area and fell on him, and after the light a butler in shirt sleeves. "What's the game?" He stood over Reggie. "Hurt yourself, have you? I dare say. What have you been up to? Why, it's Mr. Fortune!"

"Yes, I think so," Reggie mumbled. He scrambled to his feet, holding to the butler. "Get me inside, there's a good chap." He was brought into the empty kitchen. "Oh, my hat!" he moaned, and felt himself painfully.

"Hurt bad, sir? However did you come to fall down the area?"

Reggie blinked at him. "I'm quite sober, you know."

"I can see that, sir. But how did it happen?"

"I was just going to post—and some fellows jostled me—and the gate came open—and I came down—and that's that. See if I've dropped my letters in the area, will you?" But the letters were not to be found. "Sorry to bother you. Whose house is this?"

"Sir Roger Brown's, sir. You know Sir Roger. But I'm afraid he's gone to bed."

"That's all right. I didn't come to see him. I say, would you mind just helping me back to my place? I'm a little shaky."



"Reggie contemplated her with half-shut eyes. She was young but many years more than a girl."

The butler helped him like a father. But the darkness of the street was empty. Reggie shut his door and limped to the telephone and sat down by it. "Is that you, Lomas? Fortune speaking. Yes, I know

I ought to be in bed. I'm going. But I want you to send some stout fellow to watch my humble home. A nice big policeman or two, please. Then I shall feel comfy. What's the matter? I don't know. But somebody doesn't love me. Rather queer things have been happening. I'd better have some of the higher intelligence on it. Anything definite? Oh, yes, quite definite. It nearly vitiated my future career. The silent tomb yawned for Reginald. You'll come round yourself? My dear old thing, that's very gratifying." He limped upstairs to his dressing-room.

He had removed his damaged clothes and the dirt, he was completing an examination of his aching body, when a car drove up and the bell rang. He got into a dressing-gown and reconnoitred from an upper window and saw the slim shape of Lomas accompanied by men of comforting solidity. He made haste to let them in.

"Good Gad!" Lomas stared at him. "My dear fellow!"

"Yes. The eye blackens rapidly. Other parts also. And are we yet alive and see each other's face? We are. Only just. I wouldn't be, if I hadn't got the area gate open. Did you ever long to fall into an area, Lomas? I did, passionately. Interestin' state of mind."

"My dear Reginald." Lomas took him by the arm. "You come along to bed. We've got men watching the house and one will stay inside. It's all right now."

"Oh, yes. Yes. Quite all right. Bed is indicated. I ache at large. Nothing serious, but tiring. I shall be very stiff to-morrow. And not beautiful. That schoolgirl complexion is lost awhile. Ow!"

Lomas helped him to bed with solicitude. "Now what about a doctor, young fellow?"

"Oh, no. No. The medical profession is superfluous. We'll keep it quite quiet. Give 'em something to think about."

"Who do you mean?"

"I haven't the slightest idea. Dr. Marchal, perhaps. With him Madame Marchal. A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Somebody must yearn to know whether I am a corpse or otherwise. And what's being done about it. Let's be mysterious, too. Same like the vanishin' doctor. Lomas, dear, I'm confusin' you. It is confusin' to the simple mind." And he told the story of the Marchals and the attack. "There's the crude, bewilderin' facts. And if you can see what they mean, I shall be delighted. And surprised." He gazed dreamily at Lomas with the one eye which remained open. "Yes, I should say we're goin' to be a good deal surprised before we're done with it. Speakin' broadly, anything would surprise me."

"One thing's clear," said Lomas briskly.

"Oh, my aunt!" Reggie moaned. "And what is that?"

"There's been a determined attempt to kill you."

"Ow! I wish you wouldn't make me laugh. It hurts. Yes. Somebody is not loving me. I did notice that. One of the crude facts. But its meaning escapes me. Why should anyone want to eliminate me? And oh, Mr. Lomas, this is so sudden. And what is the reason for the existence of Madame Marchal?"

"Let's take it from the beginning," said Lomas in a superior instructive manner.

And Reggie murmured: "Yes, dear."

"The natural explanation is that these Marchals were engaged in the attack on you."

"Yes. It could be. Yes. Some connection between the Marchals and the sandbags is indicated. But why the sandbags? Why does anyone want to slay poor Reginald? *Cui bono?* Who's goin' to gain by my decease? I haven't got anything big in hand."

Lomas nodded. "There's no important case just now. I thought of that."

"I riled old Basildon to-day, showin' him he didn't know a streptococcus when he met one. But he wouldn't murder me. He only wanted to."

"Let's be serious, old fellow," Lomas reproached him.

"Oh, I am. All over."

"This is a nasty business. An attack on you is an attack on the work of the police."

"Yes. Yes. Also it hurts."

"As there's no question of interference with a case in hand, the motive must be revenge. Someone you've convicted, or his friends want to be even with you."

"Yes. It could be," Reggie sighed. "I suppose I've made a few earnest enemies."

"We've had a case or two before, haven't we?"

Reggie moved uncomfortably. "Rather a near thing once or twice. Yes. And this was near enough. Yes. Revenge is one possibility. But there are difficulties. You can fit the vanishing doctor into revenge. Or Madame. But not the two of 'em together."

"Quite simple, my dear fellow. Marchal couldn't get at you, so Madame was sent to

discover if you were going to be out for ever."

"That's why she was so anxious to know whether I had seen Marchal? I wonder."

"Naturally she wanted to find out if you had any suspicions."

"Yes. She did want. She very much wanted to find out what I made of the vanishing Marchal. But I don't think she knew whether I'd seen him or not. That's why I didn't tell her."

"No doubt Marchal was sent to attack you, got scared of waiting so long, thought he was suspected, and bolted. So the people behind him wouldn't know what happened."

"Theory number two," said Reggie wearily. "You can have which you like, Lomas, but not both."

Lomas stared. "There's no new theory. I'm only working out this idea of a conspiracy of revenge."

"My dear chap! Oh, my dear chap! First theory, Marchal went back to the hypothetical people behind him and said I was not at home, so they sent Madame to see if I'd come in. All right. Second theory, Marchal got the wind up and bolted, so the people behind him didn't know what had happened to him and Madame was sent to find out. All right again. But one must be wrong."

"There's no real difficulty," Lomas pronounced.

And Reggie moaned, "Oh, my hat!"

"Don't you see, it's obvious there are people in it besides the Marchals——"

"Oh, yes. My friends with the sandbags. I did notice 'em."

"Whether Marchal has bolted in a funk or has been working with them all the time doesn't matter much."

"My only aunt," Reggie moaned.

"The point is, we have to deal with a gang who are out for your blood. Well, they won't get it now." Lomas looked at him with affection. "I'll see to that, old man. But I have to get them. And the only clue is these Marchals."

"Yes. Thanks very much. A hefty man or so will be grateful and comfortin'. Yes. Safety first. I have no desire to die for my country. But this revenge motive is only a hypothesis, you know. Not one of our best hypotheses, Lomas, old thing."

"What's in your mind?"

"Well, some of the facts don't fit into it. What worried Madame was that she didn't know whether I'd seen Marchal or not. What she was afraid was that he'd told me something."

"Why, naturally, she was afraid, as the man had bolted, he might have given them away."

"All right. Try again. When I went out I had some letters to post. Those letters didn't go into the area with me. They weren't on the pavement when I came back home. They must have been taken by the sandbag men. The only possible inference is, those fellows wanted to make sure I shouldn't send information of anything Marchal had told me."

"Good Gad!" said Lomas. "That's an odd thing. But it's rather mad. You'd been hours in the house. Anything urgent that Marchal might have told you, you would have telephoned. They couldn't expect you to write us a letter about it."

"Yes. That's assuming Marchal came to tell me something short and snappy. But they seem to have thought it would want writing out."

"What on earth could that be?"

"I haven't the slightest idea. Possibly some code or plan. He called himself a doctor. It might be something medical. It might be anything. But you see there's another possible hypothesis. Marchal came to give me some information, and because I may have it, somebody felt it worth while to do me in."

"Quite. It is a possibility. But we come back to the same point. The only clue is the Marchals. That's what I said."

"Dear Lomas," Reggie smiled. "Ow! I wish you wouldn't be funny. Who is Marchal, what is he, that I have got it in the neck? What's become of Marchal since he gave us all the slip? Run away and look for him. He isn't in the medical directory. Edith thinks he's foreign. Big man with beard. That's all she knows. He left this house sometime in the dusk. Madame is a dark, slim thing in dark clothes not too good. Nearly new wedding ring—very yellow—she's certainly foreign. Might be French. She went off in a taxi with a man in it about eight." He yawned. "That's all the available facts. And I wish you luck." His one operative eye closed. He wriggled down into bed. "I would like to sleep if it could be managed. Good-bye."

"My dear fellow," said Lomas affectionately. "Sleep the clock round. We'll look after you."

But the energies of the solemn men who watched over Reggie's house were not called

for. Undisturbed, his bruised and sprained body rested, his face sank back into its natural shape and colour. And day by day his telephoned inquiries to the Criminal Investigation Department became more satirical.

Till Lomas brought Superintendent Bell to lunch. "You've been sounding peevish Reginald. I always find Bell has a soothing influence."

"You've had a bad time, sir," said Bell with solicitude.

"Not nice, no. Startlin' at the moment. Kind of lookin' at the everlastin' void, Bell. And afterwards painful, like havin' been beaten with many stripes. It leaves a certain resentment. But the pain is now in the mind."

"Ah! That sort of thing shakes you up, doesn't it?" Bell nodded.

"My dear chap! Oh, my dear chap! I'm not a plaintive sufferer. I want to know what's become of the elusive Marchal. That's my complaint. Well, come and lunch. I can eat both sides of my mouth now. Very gratifyin'! You watch. Ignore the iridescent eye."

He fed them on oysters and an entrecôte Elise, that rich way of dealing with beef which he designed and christened with his cook's name; he gave them Richebourg to drink and apologised for the meal. "A trifle crude, a trifle coarse. But fortifyin' to the nerves. Vigour is what we need."

"Sleep is what I shall need," Lomas chuckled.

"We haven't been exactly dawdling, sir," Bell protested. "You know this isn't an easy case to handle. Absolutely the only thing we had to work on was these Marchals coming and going here. I've got a taxi-driver who picked up a man and a woman in Regent Street and drove 'em to your house and drove 'em back to the Marble Arch. That's not going to do us a lot o' good. He didn't notice the man. It was the woman did the talking. He describes her same as you did. Then about Marchal. A taxi was engaged by a chap in your street about tea-time that day and drove him to the Victory Hotel—big, fair chap. Well, they've had a Doctor and Madame Marchal there. Came in the morning. On that evening Marchal went out again and a taxi took a big man like him to Hertford Place—you know, up in Westminster—he didn't give a number, he wasn't seen to go in anywhere. There we've lost him. He hasn't been back to the hotel as far as we know. Madame stayed on two days. Then she left and we lose her. The hotel noticed nothing special about 'em. Luggage—a couple o' suit-cases. Thought they were foreigners. Only their names in the register."

"Bell, have you told me all?" said Reggie solemnly.

"Well, of course there was one other clue—the sandbagging. I'd say that was a professional crook's job, it was managed so neat. If you hadn't thought of going down the area they'd have done you in. And I never knew anybody but a professional use a sandbag."

"Professional work," Reggie smiled. "Yes, I thought that. What about it?"

"Well, we don't have sandbags much in London. Long time since there was a street case. Yet they were ready for you. To my mind that looks like foreigners."

"Yes, yes. Again foreign talent is suggested. Another little point. The directin' intelligence is cautious. If they'd used the knife they could have got me just as well. Probably they would have got me. But it would have been plain murder. If I'd been found dead in the road with a fractured skull and a bruise or two, I should have gone to the grave as a traffic accident."

"Yes, very likely," Lomas grinned. "As you wouldn't have done the post-mortem yourself."

"Don't be facetious. It would have been most annoyin'. Think of me in heaven watchin' another doctor report it accidental death and you fellows hushin' up the case. My hat! I'd have come back to haunt you."

"You would, Reginald. I'm sure you would," Lomas chuckled.

Bell was shocked. "This sort of talk doesn't help," he rebuked them.

"Oh, my Bell! Not wholly irrelevant. I'm pointin' out that if the thing had gone accordin' to plan, there would have been no tiresome policeman sniffin' after the Marchals. Two inferences. First, that somebody don't want us to know the Marchals, though Marchal came runnin' round to me. Second, that the somebody is a cautious, far-sighted mind but frightened. He can plan very clever, he has large resources, he is in some sort of danger and he'll do anything he can think of to save himself. I don't like it, Lomas. I don't like it at all. I should say we'll get him in the end. These clever, nervous criminals generally put in one crime too many. But he may do a lot of damage first."

"My dear fellow!" Lomas pushed back

in his chair. "This is sheer prophecy. You not only imagine the required criminal, but tell his fortune! Very daring. Not like you at all."

"Imagine!" Reggie moaned. "Oh, my aunt! Imagine nothing. That's what he is. Don't you feel it in the facts?"

He led the way to his library and set them smoking, and lit a long cigar and sank into a chair. "Yes. The primary problem is, what was Marchal coming to tell me?"

"You give up the theory of revenge?" Lomas said.

"No. I never had it. No. I wonder how things would have worked out if I had told Madame I hadn't seen Marchal."

Bell frowned at him. "Why didn't you tell her? Seems the natural thing."

"Because she wasn't natural. Because I didn't believe in her."

"Ah! You always thought she was fishy. Then what did you think she was up to?"

"I hadn't the slightest idea. But I thought if she believed I knew something she'd show her hand."

"Your mistake," said Lomas.

"Oh, no. No. We had a trump played. Attempt to murder me. It didn't take the trick. But it shows you the sort o' card they've got ready. And the card they're afraid of—what Marchal knows."

"My dear fellow! This is nothing but fancy. What could Marchal have been going to tell you?"

And again Reggie murmured, "I haven't the slightest idea." Then he sat up. "Anything else occur to you, Bell?"

"Not me, sir. Everything's broken down."

"I wouldn't say that. There are points. Curious diffusion of the Marchals over London. He goes to Westminster and vanishes. She is picked up in Regent Street and dropped at the Marble Arch. Another curious point. Very curious. Madame stays on at the hotel two days after the vanishing of Marchal." He looked at them with plaintive inquiry. "I don't understand that at all."

"Probably waiting for news of your death," Lomas shrugged.

"I wonder. Well, take the definite spots in Marchal's movements. Victory Hotel, Hertford Place, Westminster. Who lives in Hertford Place?"

Bell smiled. "You can take it we've worked that out, sir. One of those old streets behind the Abbey, been rebuilt as rather recherché houses. Absolutely first-class people. Young Rimington of the Rimington firm, Sir Blayne Gorton, Lady Esther Botynor, Viscount Ford, and Mr. Spennilove the architect. Don't sound much like foreign crooks, does it? However, we tried 'em all. Nothing known of any Dr. Marchal calling. Gorton's away, but I saw his butler. He's all right."

"Yet the elusive and foreign Marchal picked out this small distinguished street. Curiouser and curiouser. Architect? I think not. Ford—he's a discharged politician. No. Lady Esther's a lamb. I've met her. Gorton—Blayne Gorton——" He looked at Lomas.

"Chemical manufacturer. Quite well known. Leading man in his line."

"Yes. That is so." Reggie blew smoke-rings. "Yes. And Gorton is away. Was Gorton away when Marchal drove to Hertford Place?"

"I didn't get that," Bell frowned. "The butler just said he was away. And nobody had called that night. Quite clear."

"One more house. Young Rimington. The Rimingtons have a finger in a lot o' pies."

"My dear fellow!" Lomas was impatient. "Historic firm. Sound as the Bank—and as straight. What's in your mind? It's absurd to suspect Rimingtons or Gortons of conspiracy with a gang of crooks."

"Oh, yes. Yes. That is indicated. But you don't explain why Marchal drove to Hertford Place."

"Because he was going somewhere else," said Lomas.

"You think so?" Reggie murmured. "Well, well. Take it from the other end. What about the Victory Hotel? Did you see the chambermaid, Bell?"

"Yes, sir. Saw everyone who had to do with 'em. She couldn't describe 'em."

Reggie gazed at him with dreamy eyes. "I wonder," he murmured. "I'd like to talk to the chambermaid."

Bell was not pleased. "What do you think I've missed, sir?"

"Oh, my Bell! Nothing. Nothing anybody knew. But there might be something they don't know they know."

"All right, sir. I like to see you at work. If you're up to it."

Lomas laughed. "Oh, take him along. He won't be happy till he's showing us how to do our job."

"I wish I knew," Reggie mumbled. He stood up and surveyed them and his round

face was pale and anxious. "Don't you see? This isn't the usual police case: crime all over before you come along. What they did to me is only a by-product. We haven't got near the real thing. And it's still going on. With some clever, careful devil directin'. If we can't cut in quick there'll be more than my head broken. Come on, Bell."

The Victory Hotel is a place of a hundred beds and the simple life. The manager, a brisk and competent Swiss, received another police inquiry with resignation. For his part he had told everything. He could not himself recall the Marchals clearly: an impression that the man was a big blonde and spoke English not like an Englishman—that was all. In fact, he had only remarked them once, when first they came and he happened to be in the hall. It was his habit to go round the tables at dinner and speak to the guests. But they did not dine in the hotel.

Reggie stirred. "Oh, Madame stayed on two days after the doctor departed. But she didn't have dinner."

"She did not have dinner. That is sure. It is not charged to her. When the doctor departed, I do not know. You see, they engaged a room for two persons and they pay for two all the time. But there are meals charged for one only. See"—he produced his books. "Breakfast for one—lunch for one—breakfast for one in the bedroom the next day and the next. Then the bill is paid and the room given up. They tell me Madame paid and no one here saw Monsieur after the first day. But I do not know."

"That's clear enough." Bell looked at Reggie. "The man never came back here after he went out that first evening."

Reggie gave no sign of hearing. "How did she pay her bill?" he murmured.

"How?" The manager stared. "She paid in her room. She paid the chambermaid. That is a little unusual, yes. But since she had only two meals downstairs, natural enough."

"Breakfast and lunch on the day after she came—then nobody saw her but the chambermaid? I see. Yes." Reggie contemplated him with dreamy eyes. "The Marchals had never been here before?"

The manager shrugged. "What do I know? No one remembers them. They appear the type of which we have many. Good bourgeois, French, German, Swiss, Dutch, Belgian, all come to us, and English who travel. Business people. You understand, sir, this is a most respectable hotel."

"Quite. Quite. You ought to be a judge of nationality. And you think Marchal wasn't English? What was he?"

The manager spread out his hands. "I see him only a moment. I hear only a few words. I think perhaps he is French. But do not trust to that."

"Oh, no. No. I won't. Now it's mademoiselle of the bureau, and the waiter, and the chambermaid, please. And your register."

Mademoiselle brought the register. "Dr. and Madame Marchal" was written in a small neat hand with a flourish. "Might be his real name, it's done so natural," Bell grunted. "Used it often, anyway." Mademoiselle remembered Marchal as a big man with a fair beard, his wife as small and dark. She thought him flurried. The man's accent was French. The woman had been to the bureau once or twice for her key. She was very polite. "No change in her manner as time went on?" Reggie asked.

"But I do not remember. I think I did not see her only at first."

The waiter also thought Madame amiable. He supposed her French. Certainly she spoke to him in French. She was dark and small. But pretty, without doubt. "What you call nice in English."

Bell grunted. "You think so?" Reggie murmured. "Yes." He turned to the manager. "Is the room which Madame had vacant?"

"One moment. Seventy-three. Yes, it is vacant. But you will find nothing there. We have had people in there since. It has been cleaned and cleaned again. Also the Superintendent, he saw it before."

"That's right. Nothing there, sir," said Bell.

"No, I suppose not," Reggie sighed. "But I'd like to talk to the chambermaid in the room."

"If you please." The manager led the way.

The room was of the bleak comfort standard in such hotels. Reggie surveyed it and sighed. "Oh. A telephone."

"All our rooms have the telephone," said the manager proudly.

Reggie sat down on one of the beds. "That's led to a lot of crime," he murmured, and contemplated the instrument with disgust.

The chambermaid appeared, a stocky, sallow Swiss. She was sullen. She would

not understand anything or say anything. Reggie dropped into French. "Come, you have nothing to be afraid of, have you? Speak frankly, then. What is this you have noticed about Madame Marchal?"

She found her tongue and a clatter of Swiss French came. She had noticed nothing. She was tired of that Madame Marchal. She knew nothing about her. Scarcely she had seen her. And all the world asked questions. She desired never to hear of her again. A sickly, stingy creature. And of a vile temper.

"But this is very interesting," Reggie purred. "You are most intelligent, my child. You notice many things. It is quite unusual. I see that you are going to be of great help to the police. Now tell me all about the Marchals." He beamed upon her.

She smirked. Certainly she would tell Monsieur. She was very willing to assist the police. As for the Marchals—she would be happy to catch them. A stingy creature. She always believed Madame was bad.

"Yes. That's very nice. When did you begin to believe that?"

But as soon as she knew Madame. Madame was of a temper. She kept her room. The room must be dark, the room must be quiet, nothing must be touched, she would not talk. And when she went—a shilling, one shilling.

"Yes. Too bad. Yes," Reggie purred. "But she wasn't in her room all the time?"

No, not at first. It was after the first day. Then she seemed always to be there; it was always locked, she would not have the blind up. A sickly thing.

"I see. Yes. French, weren't they?"

"So they say downstairs. Me, I do not believe it. When I heard them talking together it was not French."

"German?"

"No, no. I know German so well as French. It was like German a little, but not German. I do not know what it was."

"You're a very useful girl," Reggie beamed. "Now, did they leave anything behind?"

The chambermaid was embarrassed. "She—she would not leave anything, that one," she said vehemently.

"No luck." Reggie sighed, and jingled his pockets. "Paper box, bottle, nothing? Not a scrap of waste?"

"I remember! There was a box, it had *pâtisserie*, an empty box. Could I find it?" She bustled out.

"God bless her." Reggie smiled at Bell. "They had some confectionery and she pinched it."

She came back in triumph. "Voilà, Monsieur. You see, just a *pâtissier's* box, all empty."

Reggie took it. It bore the words "Robert: Montagne de la Cour." He shook into his hand some crumbs and turned them over with his finger. "Yes. Empty," he said, and over his face came a slow, benign smile. "But it's worth five shillings, my dear." He wandered out.

Bell took leave of the manager and pursued him. Mr. Fortune was already in his car and it began to move while Bell was getting in. "Sorry, sir." Bell struggled off his lap. "In a hurry, are we?"

"Oh, yes. Yes. Still pantin' far behind. But not without hope."

Bell looked at the convalescent face and saw a dreamy amiability. "You're feeling happy?" he said with surprise. "I knew when you smiled at that girl. But it beats me what you've got."

"Not happy. No," Reggie murmured. "If I could find out who telephoned to that woman I might be."

"Good lord, sir. You don't even know anybody did."

"My dear chap!" Reggie sighed. "Oh, my dear chap! Somebody did. Probably after lunch on the second day. Hence the subsequent seclusion."

"How can you know?" Bell grumbled.

"Oh, my Bell! Look at the facts. After lunch comes a change of life. She shuts herself up. She keeps the room dark. Having been amiable downstairs, she is found peevish. Obviously something happened. And the telephone must have been in it. An evil invention."

Bell meditated. "Looks like funk. She might have got news they didn't manage to do you in. But how can we trace who telephoned to a woman in a hotel?"

"We can't. I know that. A diabolical invention." Reggie sighed. "Well, well. Let us use it."

"What do you want to do?"

"I want to telephone to Professor Delarey. He lives in Brussels. You've got to find out his number. The Criminal Investigation Department has its simple uses."

"Brussels!" Bell stared. "How do you make out we want Brussels?"

"Takin' one thing and another. Here a little and there a little. And the confectionery is conclusive. You weren't inter-

ested in the confectionery, Bell. The weakness of a great mind. I like sweets. Almost all sweets. Pain à la Grecque is pleasin' stuff."

"I saw you'd got something out of that box."

"Only crumbs. But they were pain à la Grecque all right. And the box came from a gentleman who keeps a shop in the Montagne de la Cour. So that settled it."

"Oh, did it?" Bell grunted.

"Yes, I think so. Considerin' all things. The name Marchal—which is probably genuine. The accent, which might be French. The unknown language, which was like German but not German. It might be Flemish. Assume the Marchals are Belgian Brussels, steep street up by the Musée. So I'll ring up old Delarey and ask him if he knows any Dr. Marchal."

Bell stared at him. "And I told you there was nothing to get at the hotel!"

"You never know, you know," Reggie murmured. "Perhaps it isn't anything." The car turned out of Whitehall to Scotland Yard. "You notice the sad little fact, we've lost two people or so—lost 'em some days——" He hummed an ancient comic song. "'And Maisie wonders why!'"

An hour afterwards he came out of a telephone-box and wandered away to Lomas's room. "A cup of your weaker tea would do no harm," he moaned, and dropped into a chair and wiped his face and neck. "A



"Dr. Doelen bowed again and gazed at Reggie with respectful curiosity."

and those facts are covered. And the confectionery confirms the hypothesis. They make pain à la Grecque special good in Brussels, and the Montagne de la Cour is in fiendish invention. Praise God. I shall never know what my French sounds like over the telephone." He shuddered. "Delarey sounds like a revolution in hell. But that



was after. For the first week or two he was a lorry changing gear. Before my screams roused his interest."

"Oh, he was interested?"

"My only aunt!" Reggie moaned. "Hell's foundations quiver with the shout of praise—same like the hymn says. Oh, my head!" Bell brought him a cup of tea.

"So he knows all about Marchal?" Lomas was impatient.

Reggie waved a hand at him. "No, dear, no. Don't hustle me. I can't abear it." He drank deep and sighed. "Oh, my hat! And you think that's tea. What a life! My poor Lomas. Well, well. Delarey does know Marchal. That's the fundamental fact. Dr. Marchal is real. Quite genuine. Dr. Quentin Marchal was a brilliant young chemist. Special line the rarer metals. Unfortunately he didn't keep to pure science. He married a wife—and wanted an income. He was tempted and he fell. He went into the chemical industry. He took a job with the S.A.I."

"What the deuce is that?"

"Oh, my dear chap! The Société Anonyme Internationale. Big chemical manufacturers—works in Brussels, in Holland, in Switzerland. Make the world's supply of delium. Ever heard of that?"

"Use it in medicine, don't you?"

"Yes. Quite a lot. We're going to use it more. If we can get enough. Well, that's who the genuine Dr. Marchal is. But Delarey hadn't heard of his leaving Brussels. Thought it unlikely. He's going to find out and telephone later. Somebody else can take that message." Reggie rose wearily. "I'm going to call this a day, Lomas old thing. But if the real Marchal has left Brussels, some of your bright young men had better find out quick where Sir Blayne Gorton's got to. If it was the real Marchal who came to London, we have a clever chemist in the employ of a big company, going, privily and by stealth, to the door of a rival manufacturer and vanishin'—with wife. That wants a lot of explanation. Good-bye."

In the morning the detective who kept watch in his house met him as he came to breakfast. "Message from Superintendent Bell, sir. Mr. Lomas would like to see you when you feel up to it."

"Tell him I'm taking nourishment," Reggie murmured.

Lomas was found alone. His usual sprightliness was overcast with solemnity. He was official and important.

"Well, my dear Reginald, how are things?"

"If you mean me, I am fit but peevish. Things are horrid. Everybody is so respectable."

"Quite. Quite. I hate to bother you. But the case is taking a very difficult turn. It's one of the gravest I have had. Your professor telephoned again last night. He tells us that Marchal is not to be found in Brussels, nor Madame Marchal. He asked the employers, this Société Anonyme Internationale, if they knew what had become of him and could get no information. They understood that Marchal was away on private affairs. The professor says nobody in authority was to be found. Well, that's sufficiently unsatisfactory. I have felt justified in asking the Brussels police to take it up."

"Oh, yes. Yes. Let's do all the regulation things. But what about Sir Blayne Gorton?"

"Well, on that report, as we agreed, I gave instructions to locate Gorton. It's not certain, but we have reason to believe he's down at his works at Erith."

"Livin' at the works?" Reggie's sleepy eyes opened. "What zeal!"

"He has rooms there. He's very keen on the manufacturing side, I'm told. Puts in a lot of time at it. Well, I've sent Bell down to make sure if he is there and get at him."

"Yes. Yes. I'm afraid what the butler said wasn't evidence."

"Very awkward affair." Lomas shook his head. "Difficult to believe a man like Gorton would be concerned in crime."

"My dear chap! Oh, my dear chap! Anybody may be concerned in crime. From the highest motives."

"No doubt. Very difficult to handle such a case."

"Oh, yes. Yes. But we needn't assume motives are high. I should say they're not. Don't be awed by big business."

A man brought in a card. "Dr. Doelen. Address in Brussels." Lomas looked at Reggie. "Do you know him?"

"Not personally. No. He's one of the larger noises in the S.A.I. I wonder what we can do for Dr. Doelen."

Dr. Doelen was a short, wide man with a big head. "Mr. Lomas?" He smiled and bowed. "It is kind of you to receive me. Perhaps I need not explain who I am?"

"Can I take it you come from the Société Anonyme Internationale?"

"As you know, I am the managing director in Brussels."

"Quite." Lomas nodded. "What can I do for you? By the way, do you know Mr. Fortune?"

"I have, of course, heard of Mr. Fortune." Dr. Doelen bowed again and gazed at Reggie with respectful curiosity.

"I speak to you in confidence, gentlemen." Doelen drew his chair nearer. "You understand, I represent large interests and I

assure you I shall be grateful for your help. The affair is this. Last week a young man of science whom we employ in our laboratories at Brussels was absent without leave. His name is Dr. Quentin Marchal. We felt some anxiety. He is a brilliant fellow and his work was valuable. Also, I could not ignore that he had important knowledge of our processes of manufacture. We made inquiries and it appeared that both he and his wife had left Brussels, travelling to London. This is a strange and disturbing situation. Pray understand me, I do not at all accuse Dr. Marchal. It is very possible that his sudden flight may be on account of some private trouble. His wife is young, they are not long married. There is perhaps an embarrassment with Madame, a motive of passion, I cannot tell. But also, I am bound to remember Dr. Marchal has the secrets of our laboratories."

"Quite. Quite. I see your position." Lomas nodded. "But what do you want us to do? Is it suggested that Dr. Marchal has committed a crime?"

"Mr. Lomas, I suggest nothing. I tell you the facts. This unhappy young man has disappeared, and it seems in London. I appeal to you to discover what has become of him. There is perhaps foul play. I cannot tell. But if you can find where he is, then we shall know what to do."

"Yes, I think so," Reggie murmured.

A paper was brought to Lomas. He read it. "Hold the line," he said, and passed it to Reggie. "Telephone message Superintendent Bell to Mr. Lomas," was written. "Woman found drowned in creek near Gorton Works. Clothing marked Adèle Marchal. Have not yet seen Gorton. Waiting instructions."

"Well, well," Reggie murmured. "Dr. Doelen, do you know Madame Marchal?"

"Know her?" Doelen stared. "I have seen her. A small dark woman."

"Would you know her if you saw her again?"

"Certainly, I think so. Why, my friend, have you news of her?"

"Yes. Yes. They say she's been found dead."

"Horrible!" Doelen cried. "But where? But how?"

"Found drowned somewhere down the river. I'm afraid you'll have to go and see the body."

"I? But why? Oh, I am at your orders. But what can I do?"

"You can tell us if she is Madame Marchal."

"It is possible, yes, if she is not much injured. I suppose you have reason to believe——"

"Oh, yes. Yes. Name on her clothes." Reggie stood up. "But you're the only man we have who knew her."

"I'm afraid we must ask you to identify, Doctor." Lomas rose.

"I am perfectly at your orders," said Doelen again. "But what was the poor creature doing down the river? Why should she be there?"

"Yes. That's what we're going to find out," said Reggie. "One moment." He went out with Lomas.

"Queer thing." Lomas frowned. "This case gets worse and worse."

"Yes. I did tell you so," Reggie mumbled. "Go on. Tell Bell to watch the works and stop Gorton if he tries to break away. We'll attend to him when we've seen the corpse. You take Doelen in your car. I'll go on first."

On a slab in the mortuary the woman's body lay and the divisional surgeon turned from it to nod at Reggie. "Well, Mr. Fortune, I didn't think they'd bring you to this. There you are."

Reggie bent over her. Her face was pale and shrunken and there was froth about her mouth. He moved the eyelids from the contracted pupils. . . . He turned to the surgeon, "Anything occur to you?"

"Medically speaking, I should say it's a plain case. She went into the water alive. There's no injuries. All the indications point to death by drowning."

"You think so? Where was she found?"

"In a bit of a tidal creek by Gorton's works. Queer place for a stranger to get to and not much of a place to drown in. But that's not for medical evidence. Drowned she was."

"Yes. I expect we'll have to say that. But there'll be a lot of work first. Notice her eyes? I should think she was under morphia when she was put in the water. That's why her pupils aren't dilated as they ought to be. That's why she didn't struggle. That's why she couldn't get out." He gazed at the surgeon mournfully. "Not that it makes much difference. But very careful. Very ingenious. As ever." He turned and looked again at the body. He drew off the wedding ring, turned it over, peered at the inside. "Well, well." Over his troubled face came a slow smile. "Everybody has a

weakness. Thrift, thrift, Horatio." He wandered out. Lomas and Doelen were already in the waiting-room. "You've lost no time. Good."

Doelen looked at him uncomfortably. "Is she much disfigured, Mr. Fortune?"

"That's for you to say, isn't it?" Reggie murmured. "Come along. There."

Doelen stopped short and made a pious exclamation in French. Reluctantly he approached the body and peered at it. "Yes, my friends," he said in a low voice, "this is Madame Marchal."

"No doubt about it?" said Lomas.

"I can have no doubt." Doelen turned from the body and stared at them. "But how? What has happened? What brought her here?"

"Yes. We'll have to discuss that," said Reggie. "Just wait, will you? I'd like you to meet Sir Blayne Gorton."

"Blayne Gorton!" Doelen cried. "The chemical manufacturer?"

"Oh, yes. Yes. He has works down here. Didn't you know?"

"Heaven, how should I know? I do not know where I am. Gorton—is it possible! The Gorton combine is in rivalry with my company. And it is beside his works that you find Madame Marchal dead. Where is Marchal, then? What does it mean?"

"We'll ask Gorton," said Reggie. "If you'll wait."

"Wait? Wait here?" Doelen looked about him in horror.

"Not in here. No. They'll make you quite comfortable." Reggie went out and spoke to the policeman at the gate. "Come on, Lomas!" he cried, and jumped into his car. "Gorton's works."

"Was that the woman who came to you?" said Lomas.

"Oh, yes. Yes. That's my Madame Marchal. So our case for Gorton is that Madame Marchal has been found dead by his works and we want Marchal to come and own her."

"If he's there."

"My dear chap!" Reggie murmured. "Oh, my dear chap!"

The car stopped at the gate of a large factory and the square form of Superintendent Bell appeared from nowhere. "Gorton's staying there all night," he said. "Want me, sir?"

"No. Stop him if he slips out," said Reggie, and they went in.

The Gorton office was of a rich solemnity. The manner of Lomas became majestic to match. A man like a churchwarden received them. "You will tell Sir Blayne Gorton that the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department wishes to see him at once." The churchwarden believed Sir Blayne Gorton was not in Erith and vanished. They were taken to the works manager. He regretted that Sir Blayne Gorton was not there. If he could do anything——

"You can find him," Lomas snapped. "At once. Tell him to bring Dr. Marchal." The manager flinched. If Mr. Lomas would explain the nature of the business he would try to communicate. Lomas scrawled on a sheet of paper, "Investigation of the death of Madame Marchal," and put it in an envelope. "Take him that." The manager fled.

In three minutes a fat man burst into the room.

"What's all this, now? What are you giving me?" he puffed.

"I want to know why a woman bearing the name of Adèle Marchal has been found dead near your works," said Lomas.

Gorton gulped and made mouths. "Let's get that," he muttered. "Madame Marchal dead down here? Natural?"

"Apparently drowned," said Lomas. "Found in the creek."

Gorton stared at him. "Why would she —it's not possible——" He spoke rather to himself than Lomas.

And Lomas said: "You've got Dr. Marchal here."

"What do you mean?" Gorton pulled himself together. "Marchal is here, been here for days, but he hasn't seen Madame Marchal. I can swear to that."

"You'll probably have to. You'd better begin by explaining why he's here in hiding."

"Hiding be damned. Marchal's here at work for me."

"While he's in the employ of the Société Anonyme Internationale? An unusual arrangement. No wonder you kept it secret."

"I've my answer to that. And so has he. Damn it, man, do you think I do things I'm ashamed of? He's left the S.A.I. and there won't be any secret about the reason. He'd got a new process for extracting delium. Dr. Doelen wouldn't take it up. The S.A.I. have got their monopoly and they don't want a process that will make the stuff cheap. Suits them better to keep down production and sell dear—with all the hospitals in the world calling out for delium. So Marchal chucked up his job with them and came over to England to get somebody to take up the

new process. He came to me and I brought him down here to try it out."

"That's an explanation of his presence," said Lomas coldly. "It doesn't explain his wife's death."

Gorton's confidence forsook him again. "I'll swear Marchal knows nothing about it," he muttered.

"Well, you'd better produce him. He'll have to come and see her," said Lomas. "Go on, tell him." Gorton stared at him and swallowed and went out. "He's got the wind up," said Lomas.

"I wonder," Reggie murmured. He wandered round the room restlessly. "Hurry it up, Lomas. Hurry, hurry."

And in a hurry Marchal came, a big bearded man in tumbled clothes. "What is this he tells me?" His sunken eyes blazed. "My wife is dead here? It is not possible. My wife is in the Hotel Victory in London."

"Oh, no. No. That's where she isn't," said Reggie quickly. "Come along. We've lost too much time already."

"You take me to see her—her body." The big frame shook. "Let us go then quick, quick." Reggie led the way.

"I shall want you too," Lomas said to Gorton.

"And you'll have me," Gorton scowled. "I'll see the lad through it."

They hurried to the car and Lomas beckoned to Bell, and with his sturdy presence beside the chauffeur they drove back to the mortuary.

Reggie took Marchal's arm. "It's this way. . . . Now——" He drew back the sheet which covered the dead woman.

And Marchal burst out laughing. Then, "God forgive me!" he said and crossed himself. He turned to Reggie. "It is not my wife. Why do you say so?"

"Look at her clothes," said Reggie gently.

"My God! Yes, I think——" Fear came into his sunken eyes again.

"Marked Adèle Marchal. Dr. Doelen said she was your wife."

"Doelen!" Marchal stared. "Doelen has been here?"

"Yes. You'd better see him now."

"I do not understand. That woman—she is not my wife—I do not know her—but she has my wife's clothes. What does it mean? Where is Doelen?"

Reggie took him to the room where, in the company of a stolid policeman, Doelen sat. "Dr. Marchal wants to ask you a little question," he said. "Why did you say that woman was his wife?"

Doelen stood up. "Marchal denies her?" He licked his lips and smiled. "He sees her dead and he denies her?" He shrugged. "Mr. Fortune, that is like the man who betrays everyone. I have finished." He turned away.

"Oh, no. No. Your error." Reggie stopped him.

"Pardon, my friend." Doelen bowed. "I think the rest is for you."

But Marchal roared: "Doelen! What have you done with my wife?" And again Dr. Doelen smiled. Marchal sprang upon him and they went down together.

"Oh, my hat," Reggie groaned. It took the help of the policeman and Bell and Gorton to drag Marchal off and hold him. Doelen lay still and pale, the collar torn from his throat.

"Damme, is he dead?" Lomas muttered.

Reggie knelt beside him. "Oh, no. No. He'll come round——" As he spoke Doelen started up, tumbled him over and bolted out. Bell ran after him. He got out of the mortuary, he rushed into the traffic of the high road and a lorry met him. . . .

"My only aunt," Reggie moaned. "We have no luck. . . ."

Bell thrust his way through the gathering crowd. "He don't want you. Gone, sir."

"Yes. Job for the experts in another world. Bring him in. Go through his pockets. I want an address: any sort of address. . . ." To the room where Marchal raged in vain wild questions Bell came back with a cigarette-case and a wallet and a bunch of keys. "Nothing else on him, sir. And the cards in the wallet have only got his address in Brussels."

"Oh, Heaven!" Marchal groaned. "What to do?"

"You go to Scotland Yard and wait," Reggie said. "Look after him, Gorton." He beckoned to Lomas and Bell turned away.

"Sir, sir, have you any hope?" Marchal caught at him.

"I don't know," Reggie said. "I'm still fighting." He took Lomas and Bell to the telephone in the keeper's room and turned the pages of the directory.

"What's the move now, Reginald?"

"The S.A.I. ought to have a London office. Yes, here we are, Gresham Lane. Come on." He bustled into his car. "Gresham Lane in the City, Sam. Rush."

"You want to bluff Doelen's men?" Lomas smiled.

"Yes. Job for you. Your strong suit, Lomas."

"I can bluff them if they know anything. What if they don't?"

Reggie spread out his hands and let them fall.

The Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department demanded the manager of the office and was introduced to a suave Englishman. "I want to know where Dr. Doelen has been staying."

The manager was politely amazed. There must be some mistake. Dr. Doelen was in Brussels.

"Oh, no, he's not. We have him safe enough. Unless you want to be arrested as an accessory, you'd better tell the truth."

The manager shook. He did not understand. Accessory to what?

"You'd better think of murder. Now. Out with it. Where has Doelen been hiding?"

The manager really had no knowledge, absolutely none. Dr. Doelen had a flat in Adelaide Mansions, generally stayed there when in London.

"Don't try to be clever. You know he has some other place. Where is it?"

The manager took time. He really did not know the address, but Dr. Doelen occasionally gave instructions when in London to ring up Tyburn 701. He supposed a club or a friend's house. He had no idea.

Lomas took the telephone from his table and asked the authorities for the name and address of Tyburn 701. "Thank you. Good-bye. Now, my man. You and all your staff hold yourselves at the disposal of the police. No one will leave the office till my men have seen them."

Reggie was already hurrying out. He opened the door of the car. "Where is it, Lomas?"

"Bacon, 3 Nicholas Street, Bayswater."

"Bayswater. And the dead woman who came to me as Madame Marchal went away with an unknown man to the Marble Arch. That's near enough."

Nicholas Street is a place of pleasant little houses by the Park. They came to the door of Number 3 and Bell was going to ring. "No. Use Doelen's keys," said Reggie, and with the second of them the door opened. "Now ring." An oldish man of the butler kind appeared and gaped.

"I'm a police officer. Superintendent Bell. This is Dr. Doelen's house?"

"Dr. Doelen is not in, sir."

"Is the lady in?" said Reggie.

The man looked different ways. "The lady, sir?" he repeated. "Dr. Doelen is not married."

"Where is she?" Reggie snapped.

"Is it Dr. Doelen's secretary, sir? I'm afraid she's not well enough to see you."

Bell took hold of him. "You'll show me where she is quick."

"Oh, very good, sir. If you say so. She's in bed, you know."

Bell pushed him on upstairs.

They came into a little dark room at the back. Lomas pulled up the blind. A woman lay in bed, her face buried in the pillow and a mass of dark hair. She was asleep or unconscious. Her breath came moaning.

"How long has she been like this?" said Reggie.

"I really couldn't say, sir. I didn't know she was took so bad. Dr. Doelen said she wasn't well and she was staying in bed. He was going to send a doctor."

"Take him away," Reggie muttered. He sat down by her side. When he rose his face was drawn and he bit his lip.

"What is it, Reginald?"

"I should say it's meningitis. Go and ring up Robert Blake for me and ask him to come round. Then Wimpole House for nurses."

Lomas returned. "Blake's coming at once. And two nurses. I suppose this is Madame Marchal?"

Reggie pointed to her hand. "Her wedding ring's gold. Yes. Who else?"

"Meningitis!" Lomas frowned. "Queer, isn't it?"

"Not a nice case. No."

"Is there a chance for her?"

"I wonder," Reggie murmured. "Stand by, will you? I want to look round this jolly house. . . ."

He was still looking when the specialist came. He had to be called.

"Hallo, Blake. Good man. I'm not really neglectin' the patient. Now look here——" They went into the sick-room together. . . .

Nurses were established in charge, the specialist departed, and Reggie came down to Lomas. "Well, what's the opinion?"

"Still fighting," Reggie smiled. "Not without hope. You see, in this beastly disease you have to know the type of organism that brought it before you can apply the right serum. Well, I've got the stuff that infected her. Doelen has a little

laboratory on the top floor, and there it is: *diplococcus intracellularis* fine and large."

"He gave it her? The devil."

"Yes, as you say," Reggie murmured. "Lots of risks in being up against Dr. Doelen. Very ingenious mind."

SOME days afterwards he wandered into Lomas's room dreamy and benign, and remarked that he was going away. "Wife—Christmas—country. Rather jolly inventions. Especially together. Before departure—is there any little thing you want?"

"I infer the patient is doing well?"

"Oh, yes. Yes." Reggie drew back. "Did you want to kiss me?"

"Thanks very much. No."

"Marchal did." Reggie sank into a chair. "He succeeded too. Overpowerin' personality. One of your larger cigars would be soothin' to the emotions. Yes. She's out of danger. Nothing else for me, is there?"

"No. You are not necessary, Reginald. In fact, there's nothing much to be done. We've established those thugs who set on you were brought over from Brussels, and they've gone back. So that's up to the Belgians. The woman drowned was a secretary of Doelen's. No doubt he murdered her, and I suspect that old rascal in his house was an accessory: there may have been others."

"Must have been," Reggie murmured.

"Probably. But we've no evidence and no chance of it. It's a mad case."

"Quite clear, isn't it?" Reggie opened his eyes.

"Good Gad! Do you pretend to see your way through it?"

"Yes, I think so. Doelen was a very clever fellow, but subject to fright. Dangerous combination. Begin at the beginning. He wouldn't take up Marchal's process for fear cheapening delium would lower his profits. Marchal rushed off to England to find a manufacturer with more pluck. He'd heard of me from old Delarey as a man of science who knew the world a bit. So he came round to ask me if Gorton would give him a square deal. I wasn't in; he got tired of waiting and decided to chance it. Off he went to Gorton, and old Gorton jumped at the process and hurried him down to the works to set plant going and try it out. Meanwhile Doelen had got on his track. That secretary woman was sent to find out if Marchal had described the process to me. I was so discreet she thought he had. So Doelen set his thugs on to wipe me out and went after Marchal. But Marchal, being in Gorton's works, was out of reach. The only way to attack him was through his wife. Doelen sent her a telephone message that a car was coming to take her to Marchal. And it came and took her to that house in Bayswater. She doesn't know what happened then, till she found herself in bed feeling very ill. No doubt Doelen drugged her and put her to bed and gave her a dose of *diplococcus intracellularis*. The secretary woman was sent back to pass for her at the hotel. Partly to prevent inquiries into her vanishing—very cautious man, Doelen—partly to pick up any communication from her husband. I dare say Doelen still had hopes of trapping Marchal too. Then she may have got the wind up, or wanted too much money and threatened to give the show away. Or Doelen may have come to think he'd trusted her too far. Anyway, it occurred to him that she might do very nicely to get Marchal arrested for murdering his wife—very ingenious man, Doelen. So he drugged her and put her into Madame Marchal's clothes and dumped her in the creek. And then he heard from Brussels that the London police were asking questions about the disappearance of the Marchals. That broke him up. He came running round to us to find out how much we knew. Very timid man, Doelen."

"Timid!" said Lomas. "Good Gad!"

"Oh, yes. That's fundamental. The timid man is a public danger. Two other little lessons in the case, my brethren. One, that a simple rational motive, like keepin' a trade secret, can produce very odd results. Secondly, that economy is a mistake in crime."

"What the deuce do you mean?"

"The wedding ring." Reggie smiled. "The new and garish wedding ring of the sham Madame Marchal. If I hadn't thought that looked brazen I should have told her I hadn't seen Marchal. And we should never have got near the case till the real Madame Marchal had died quietly of meningitis and Marchal was arrested for murder. But the poor woman bought a brass wedding ring. Never do that, Lomas."

The numerous admirers of Mr. Fortune will be interested to know that the series of his investigations which have appeared in recent numbers of THE WINDSOR will shortly be published in book form under the title "Mr. Fortune Explains."

THE LITTLE LOST BOY.

By GRACE NOLL CROWELL.

Illustrated by Margaret W. Tarrant.

HAS any one seen him ? Where did he
go ?
I lost him, O, ever so long ago.
Tell them to search for him, I cannot say
What road he took when he went away.



Tell them to watch down each alley and
street—
Ways he went often on light flying feet ;
Look through the meadows where he used
to run,
Follow where silver streams leap in the
sun ;



Look for him everywhere, he is so small,
One might pass by and not see him at all ;
But if you find a boy—if his eyes shine—
If his hair blows in the wind—he is mine ;

If he is laughing, dancing with joy,
You may be sure that he is my boy.
Tell them to search down the world's
farthest track,
And O, if they find him—please bring him
back.

MR. BUFFUM FAILS TO PROPOSE

By HUGH DE SÉLINCOURT

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

MR. BUFFUM was alone in the house, as Eliza had gone with Monnie's mother for a day's excursion by motor-coach to Tunbridge Wells and Hastings. He was wearing his neat blue suit and held in his hand the milk-bottle, wondering for the hundredth time how the cardboard circle could be removed from the top without generously spraying his arm and shoulder with creamy milk: experience had only taught him not to lean over the cardboard circle as he pressed his finger down (that resulted in a smother of milk in eyes and over face and waistcoat); it had not taught him how the horrid disc could be removed with no splash at all. He had always meant to learn the secret from Monnie's father—a mine of useful information on many subjects other than gardening—but the good man was never there at the crucial moment, and it is not a point that pops to the memory at any time and in any place.

Cautious pressure, a sudden snap, a greasy douche, a curse, a careful mopping-up—and the beastly thing is forgotten as quickly as possible until the next occasion.

Queer that milk, which was so good and necessary in its right place—a cup of tea—should be so messy and unpleasant in its wrong place; in his eye, for instance, or on his neat blue suit.

Mr. Buffum gingerly pressed his finger, prepared for the inevitable splash, when to his surprise the disc moved beautifully down for no reason that he could fathom, and he was able to remove it without even wetting his finger.

This minor triumph heightened Mr. Buffum's good spirits, which were already set fair. He had the house to himself, which was always a mysterious joy though one which could very easily be overdone, as he had found to his cost one spring, when Eliza had been called away to a sick sister and Monnie's mother had been taken ill.

He had his tea in the kitchen—a room which he had always liked very much from his earliest childhood. He felt deliciously free and independent and on his own, with no eye to inspect, no tongue to comment, and no feet to intrude.

Not only over the cardboard disc had Mr. Buffum gained a victory; he had gained a victory (and a less accidental one) over Eliza, who, when she heard that Miss Marion and Miss Lucia were coming on the day of her outing, had decided that her place in the motor-coach had better be taken by somebody else. Mr. Buffum had decided otherwise, stood his ground in a fierce battle and won the day. Indeed, he had become quite masterful, flatly denying that potatoes were a necessary adjunct to cold chicken and salad, and flatly refusing to cook them: or to allow Monnie or Monnie's father to cook them for him.

"I'll have them peeled and ready in the saucepan, and surely to goodness it's no trouble to put the saucepan on the stove and dish them up!"

But Mr. Buffum was adamant: he would not even discuss the matter.

"Oh, well, please yourself, then," Eliza quite tossed her head back to answer, and he retorted, laughing: "That is exactly what I intend to do, dear Eliza." Whereat Eliza had to laugh too, only saving herself by the usual: "You men!" Of this victorious little bout Mr. Buffum thought, smiling, as he listened to the fussy tick of the kitchen alarum clock. His cup of tea tasted very good to him, sitting at the corner of the kitchen table, on which lay two rock-buns. What was the use of having an unnecessary

plate to wash up? None, of course. Absolutely none whatever. And really the rock-bun as he nibbled it tasted better off the table's linoleum. We do cumber up our lives with such paraphernalia!

And being alone and at the top of contentment, his mind took one sudden gigantic leap from tiny happy things into the middle of that which was most momentous.

Miss Marion's voice was saying: "Yes, dear, of course, I have known and have been wondering for months why you have not asked me. Nothing would please me more than to come into your life and share it. We understand each other so well."

And his mind's eye at one swoop pictured years of richer understanding, a vista of glad life, with the same ease as a man's eye on a hill-top surveys a stretch of five counties in the sunshine when the landscape has been washed clear by rain. Everyone in their small circle becoming closer to each other, growing happier and more alive, growing more sensitive as they grew older, less touchy, less cross, less selfish, not boxed up in bodily disability . . . though bodies age.

The immediate effect of this rosy dreaming was that Mr. Buffum allowed his tea to become cold and overdrawn in the pot. There was no time to boil more water and make a fresh cup, because the table had to be laid for supper—a job for which he needed a good half-hour at least. He wanted to have all ready by the time Miss Marion and Niece Lucia came, and he disliked to be hurried. The bird carver and fork: two knives each, one large, one small: one large fork: fish knives: spoon and fork for the trifle: napkins: cruets: bread and bread-knife: mats for the plates: plates: he ran through in his mind what was wanted, then set to work leisurely laying the things on the polished oak table. Last thing, he would mix the salad: and of course if they were late the salad would probably have lost its freshness. Perhaps he had better mix the salad after they had come, while they were changing their frocks. It *would* be wiser.

And his mind kept swinging happily from the trivial to the tall. He thought of his sister, Lucia's mother, and her passion for politics and social work, which he could not share. His own position was very clear at this moment while he surveyed the well-laid table, in glad anticipation of the party to come. Let each man eliminate bullying and bad temper from his most private world, then slowly goodwill might spread to the village, from the village to the county, from the county to the country. . . . Peace in our time. . . .

But perhaps Miss Marion and Niece Lucia did not like the salad mixed—foolish girls might prefer to pour a manufactured cream from a bottle. . . .

Men used ideals to batter the next man's head with, not to live by: used them as weapons of offence rather than as staffs upon their own way.

The wine-glasses, the wine-glasses, he had forgotten the wine-glasses and the wine! What was a feast without wine? And his personal attention to the table had already transformed the meal from mere cold supper to a feast. This was an occasion.

Monnie's grinning face, pushed in through the house-place door, disturbed his pleasant ruminations.

"Lumme! Look at this, now!" the boy said, accountably amused. "Who'd have thought it!"

"Why!" said Mr. Buffum, annoyed at the harsh interruption. "I see nothing wrong." And he scrutinised the table for some misplacement.

"Oh, there's nothing as you might call wrong," the horrid boy gloated over the error which he had instantly spotted, and which Mr. Buffum, stare as he might, could not see for himself. "Some likes one thing and some likes another."

He collapsed into laughter, ejaculating, "Oh, 'elp!"

"Now. Come. What is it, Monnie?" asked Mr. Buffum, touched on his vanity.

"'Course! I forgot. You're all left-'anded!" he laughed, wringing the last drop from his wretched joke. Then at last he staggered to the table and changed the respective places of the knives and forks.

"I can't see what there is so very funny in what is after all a most natural mistake," Mr. Buffum declared.

And Monnie rocked with laughter.

"Oh, no, Guv'nor, there isn't. But you are just about the limit."

His laughter proved too infectious for Mr. Buffum to resist. He cuffed his head and kicked him with deep satisfaction, and said:

"Look here, you outrageous imp! You can keep this to yourself. If you tell your mother or Eliza, it's the sort of thing I should never hear the last of."

"No. I won't, not if I can 'elp it . . . only . . ."

Mr. Buffum did not feel reassured. But Monnie became suddenly serious to say, as he lifted the lid of the mustard-pot:

"Mother thought you'd want fresh mustard. See here!"

They peered into an empty pot.

"The mustard tin's on the second shelf at the very back on the left."

His hand reached out for the mustard-pot, but Mr. Buffum was before him.

"I will make the mustard, Monnie," he announced. "I have always liked mixing mustard. You fetch the tin—and a teaspoon from the kitchen drawer. The great thing, you know, is to make plenty and not drown it."

He took the tin and spoon from Monnie. It was a serious business. Both faces wore an intent look.

"One spoonful each, eh?" said Mr. Buffum. "And one for the pot. Though it's not tea we're making. Let's see. Is it hot water we want or cold?"

"You'd better give it me," urged Monnie.

"Some make it with vinegar," continued Buffum, ignoring Monnie's absurd suggestion and turning the cold-water tap on to a dribble, under which he held the mustard-pot.

"Ah!" he remarked with fat appreciation, as he stirred the yellow powder to a good paste.

"That's too thick," commented Monnie. "Give her a drop more."

Mr. Buffum held the pot under the dribbling tap.

"Not too much, now!"

He stirred again, a lovely mess.

"A bit thin."

"We can always add more mustard, Monnie," said Mr. Buffum, doing so. "There now!" he cried after a few moments' staring stirring. "Not a lump. Smooth as milk. Perfect."

"The pot's in a bit of a mess, isn't it?"

"That cannot be helped. It's all mustard," said Mr. Buffum, waving the criticism on one side.

"Some makes it in an egg-cup and spoons it in."

"Foolish. Foolish. And most wasteful," said Mr. Buffum, frowning. "However . . ."

An idea occurred to him. He clad a long finger in the wet wash-rag, and worked the long finger carefully round the sides of the pot. Monnie looked at the Governor's earnest face as he carried out this delicate and ingenious operation, and the sight of it caused him to explode into startling laughter and to exclaim:

"We don't pay much money but we do see life."

"What do you mean, now?" asked Mr. Buffum, ruffled. "What's wrong with that, I should like to know?" And he held out the mustard-pot with much pride.

"Nothing wrong. Oh, nothin' at all! All the tastier, I should say!"

Mr. Buffum held the pot to his nose and sniffed like a connoisseur.

"It's perfectly all right," he assured his critic, and to change the subject he remarked: "I'm glad it's been such a fine day for your mother and Mrs. Eliza."

"Lor'. Yes," laughed the boy. "But they haven't half missed something." He became suddenly serious to say, "I'm going to give Miss Lucia's car a thorough clean first thing to-morrow: it only gets a lick and a promise at that London garraige," and took himself off as abruptly as he had brought himself in.

Up at six: by nine o'clock the car would be looking shining and spotless, Mr. Buffum knew, and did not wonder very long why his own amateur efforts at "work" in the house or garden were a constant source of amusement to the expert of either sex, and even to the expert's child. Their attitude was a little galling at times but very wholesome for any undue conceit of himself. Perhaps it was wiser to leave it alone and assume superiority by simply paying for the work to be done, which he could never hope to do more than bungle at himself. However, he could lay a fire with any man or woman living: yes, and mix a salad.

Well, his preparations were complete. He had only to wait for the girls' arrival. And as he waited he refused to think that even for a moment he had been silly enough to imagine a proposal that Marion should join her life with his, merely because her presence gave him delight.

All by himself, he dared to suppose that young people nowadays treated the communion between man and woman with ease and flippancy, not because they were unaware of its majesty, but because they were in their hearts terrified of it. Lack of reverence was due to ignorance.

Deep in hazardous imaginings of what human beings might make of their lives, if they tried to understand one another, he lost the sense of time, and while he watched the clock for their arrival, they took him unawares, the corks of the wine undrawn, the wine-glasses unpolished. Fine thoughts have hindered other even more important



"She went to the door and opened it. Then turned and saying, 'Good-bye, children!' was gone."

activities; they may, nevertheless, be worth harbouring.

For as Niece Lucia and Miss Marion came hurrying in, laughing and flushed with colour from the drive, they appeared to his eye as something more than nice friendly girls; he caught by way of their laughing faces a glimpse of what womanhood is; a glimpse which reassured him in his faith, and should no doubt have put him at quite superior ease. However, it failed to do so. On the contrary, he sat mumchance and grinning, hardly able to utter the commonplaces of welcome; and he was thankful when they ran off to change their frocks and he could set about opening the wine, polishing the glasses and mixing the salad. It was good to have something actual upon which to concentrate, a trivial job to do. Trivial? The preparations for a feast! Ah, how good the little tiny things of life could become!

Happiness danced within him.

And Miss Marion came down wearing his favourite dress of mauve and silver. And Niece Lucia was late.

This happy accident affected Mr. Buffum in his present mood most strangely. He had the agreeable but odd sensation of having spent a very long time (far longer than could be rightly measured by mere days and weeks) with Marion, and that Niece Lucia was at length paying them a visit.

Their inner life was open to each other, like books which they could read together with understanding and appreciation. Her help revealed the meaning of difficult passages which alone he could not interpret: his help made clear to her much that had been dark. The book of life is meaningless to any human being in isolation; it obtains meaning in so far as he gains corroboration by sympathy. . . .



At that instant, in his slow pacing of the room, he caught a vivid glimpse of his own face in a mirror : the sight was a violent jar, like missing a top stair and landing at the bottom without using feet. But no bones were broken.

He heard Miss Marion's voice say : " It is always so peaceful here. I like the way you never start chattering. You make a person feel welcome without needing the usual words."

" There was something I particularly wanted to ask you," Mr. Buffum began with great earnestness (and an imp's whisper within said distinctly, " It would be so nice if you'd marry me. Would you ? ") : " What was it, now ? Yes. Yes. I remember. Do you like a salad properly mixed or do you prefer to add stuff from a bottle—cream or mayonnaise ? "

" Mixed," replied Marion without any hesitation, " when it's absolutely right. But the cream's safer and less bother. Most people use far too much oil."

" Ah ! " said Mr. Buffum, taken aback that a young woman should know her mind with precision on such a matter. Was no field left in which a man could move with mascu-

line superiority? He remembered with a pang how his own father had always mixed the salads, and it was assumed without question that anyone who did not like his mixing was a poor creature who did not know what was good. He was sharply shocked as only a little thing can shock us, and for some reason which he made no attempt to understand, he was delighted, though he definitely prided himself on his salads, and was fussy about the quality of the oil used.

He felt immensely happy. The poise of her head was good, well built to the neck and shoulders; and the varying quick expressions that ran over her small face a man must be alert to appreciate. He said:

"I like having the whole place all to ourselves."

"Fun!" she laughed.

"Eliza has such a poor opinion of me that she refused to go when she heard you were coming. I never heard of such nonsense. Lucia is a long time changing her frock."

"She has some plan."

Mr. Buffum started. "Some plan?"

"She'll tell you," Marion smiled.

These young people brought out the most surprising things with perfect ease. Something about "playing gooseberry" in Niece's letter flashed through his mind—perturbing him. What can these two girls have been saying about him?

Did they discuss him alone together with the terrible shrewdness they showed when he had heard them discussing young men of their acquaintance? They probably did. He grew hot all over. Did those clear young eyes read his secrets like a book in large type?

"Ah, a plan," he murmured.

"Oh, nothing very awful!" Marion smiled, calmly regarding him.

If they read him, they read him. That was their lookout. Nothing to upset him. He could not be other than himself. What did it matter? There was no reason whatever to feel shy and awkward as a schoolboy in the head master's drawing-room taking tea with the head master's wife. No reason whatever. None. Such feelings were the limit of absurdity in a grown man.

Nevertheless, such exactly were Mr. Buffum's feelings, ruling reason. In came Niece, unhurried and determined, not wearing an evening-frock but a long outdoor coat and a hat, buttoning on her gloves. She calmly asked:

"What time does Eliza get back from her outing?"

"They reach the village at ten-fifteen," answered Mr. Buffum, staring.

"Good. I'll pick them up on the way back."

"On the way back?" murmured Mr. Buffum.

"Yes, dear. I want to dodge up an article about a folk-dancing show in Arundel."

"But why didn't you mention it? We could have all gone!" he cried.

"That's exactly why I didn't. No need to drag you both along. Why pretend you won't love a quiet evening alone with Marion, old man?"

"I don't. But. . . ."

"Oh, I know you like your plans all thought out weeks beforehand. Well, here's a plan that isn't. It's no good being angry."

"I'm not angry," Mr. Buffum insisted; but Niece went coolly on as though he had not spoken:

"It's much pleasanter being alone sometimes with a person one's fond of." Something in the clear matter-of-fact statement of this simple truth completely took Mr. Buffum's breath away. In the world in which he had grown up only engaged couples were ostentatiously left alone together, so now the world in which he had grown up collapsed.

He smiled and blinked and said "Ah!"

And heard Miss Marion say: "Quite one of your best plans, darling."

Lucia put a hand on Marion's head and said:

"He's shy as a skinned eel now, poor dear. But he won't remain so long with you."

She went to the door and opened it. Then turned and saying, "Good-bye, children!" was gone.

Mr. Buffum seemed to be left standing an infinity of time on the hearthrug with a fixed smile stuck fast on his face—not more than two or three seconds as the clock ticks. Then he laughed aloud, and said:

"Well, I'm dashed! Well, I *am* dashed! You two young people! Having completely upset all my arrangements for the whole evening, I suppose we'd better go and have some supper."

"Yes. Do let's!" said Marion, rising.

Half-way to the door Mr. Buffum stopped abruptly: "That absurd child! She's had nothing to eat."

"A large crust of bread, a portion of cream-cheese and a glass of beer. She washed up the glass."

"Oh, she washed up the glass. I'm glad she washed up the glass."

And most surprisingly and suddenly he went off into silent laughter, from which he recovered to say: "Excuse my smiling. But it really all is too deliciously topsy-turvy. Are you quite sure that she washed up her glass? Auntie discreetly leaving her little friends alone."

"She is a very dear child," said Marion. She managed to convey in her tone the gentlest reprimand for his hilarity, and also a reminder that she was a woman, a good six years older than Niece. But the remark tickled Mr. Buffum's nervousness, as the reference to age seemed to emphasise what struck him as the topsy-turvyness of the situation. His own chief avuncular wish was to hover in the background and help the young people by any means in his power to have a better time. He felt as much at ease as an old actor who finds himself on the stage somehow expected to play, not his own part, but another's for which he was not even dressed.

In the dining-room Miss Marion cleared away the third place he had so carefully laid and with it cleared away the last shadow of help he hoped for from Niece's company.

"I'm superstitious about an empty place," she said.

"So am I," Mr. Buffum agreed, but could not be explicit why.

A chunk of cold salmon: bunches of leafy lettuce: a chicken: his feast looked poor and meagre to the eye of his extreme shyness. Not even the support of Eliza in and out of the kitchen, waiting on them. It was a desperate business. He heard Marion's calm voice speaking. She said:

"Do mix the salad. I believe you're a dab at mixing a salad."

"I really couldn't dream of it!" he hurriedly replied.

"Don't dream of it. Do it," she urged.

He could only shake his head, a faint fixed grin on his face.

And then his self-consciousness played him a really nasty trick. It showed him with horrid distinctness the true reason why Miss Marion was at such complete ease in his company. He counted not at all as a man. She minded as little being alone with him as with a maiden aunt. He was no dashing young fellow, superbly, dangerously male. He was just in their eyes a dear old fogey—innocent and safe.

Ha! Was he, though! Was he! Perhaps he'd show 'em. Perhaps he wasn't quite such a nincompoop as they thought him.

Poor fellow! Such silly thoughts have been known to run through wiser heads than his. They have even led to action. Happily they led in Mr. Buffum's case to no effect more serious than the shaking of the hand that offered her the bottle of salad cream, which she took, saying with a smile:

"I would like to have tasted a salad mixed by you."

That was the last trick self-consciousness played him: with that he touched the limit of its absurdity. For his obstinate neck was somehow forced round to look at Miss Marion, and he saw that she was pleased to be with him, simply pleased to be with a dear person whom she was glad of a chance to know better. So very simple. He forgot the odious image of himself that leered from the looking-glass; he forgot the horrid shape and voice he was so sick of carrying for ever round—he forgot himself. The weight of the Past fell away: fear of the Future vanished: he lived in the Present. He felt no special age: no special sex: enjoyed merely a quickness of mind, an ease of speech, an unembarrassed awareness of the woman he talked with and listened to and occasionally touched. He was sure that she was interested in what he said and understood it. Words had somehow their full meaning and laughter somehow its full delight.

He lived in the Present and found it timeless and ageless. Indeed he lost all sense of time (and with it of age) so completely that when Niece returned at a quarter to eleven he could not believe that three hours had passed like three minutes or (he rubbed his eyes to realise) like three years.

"Well!" she said with mischief in her eyes. "Have you forgiven me for my outrageous plan?"

"I never said . . ." Mr. Buffum began.

"You said nothing, old man," Niece interrupted. "But don't tell me you weren't furious at having all your private little arrangements upset."

"Have it your own way," he agreed, thankful that she had chosen to describe his state of mind as *fury* rather than, with greater accuracy, as *fright*.

"Besides, you had to have a lesson."

"A lesson?" Mr. Buffum repeated, baffled.

"Yes, a lesson! Not always to be so funny about *me* liking to have what you call boy-friends. You're every bit as bad."

Mr. Buffum mumbled something inaudible. He was anxious not to raise an argument, or to disturb in any way his happy sense of freedom.

"Yes, and another thing. Perhaps you'll understand it's possible to have a lovely time with a person without ever thinking at all of wanting to marry them."

"Oh, yes. Of course not. Of course," Mr. Buffum hastened to agree.

"Wouldn't you now think me an impertinent little wretch if I'd come stealing in discreetly with *Bless you, my children!* oozing and dripping from every pore?"

"Yes; oh, yes, of course," he hurriedly said, thankful to goodness that nobody *could* read another's mind exactly.

"Well, then!" she said, as though deciding the matter. But her bald statements decided nothing at all for Mr. Buffum.

"Tell me about the folk dancing," he suggested hopefully. "Did you find material for an article?"

Niece looked at him and shook her head.

Marion, who had not felt called upon to interrupt the little family tilt, now put in her word.

"He's been such a perfect dear. You mustn't tease him any more."

"Teasing him!" Lucia burst out like a small explosion. "I'm trying to knock a grain of sense into his iniquitous old head."

"Planting seeds with a hammer!" laughed Marion.

Poor Mr. Buffum's mind could not regain steadiness, swinging from the extremes of giddy elation to guilt. Niece probed and touched what Uncle's experience had left secret and confused. He had never enjoyed a time with another human being so much as he had enjoyed the three hours with Marion. The child's wish to perpetuate those three hours through life fought the feeling that the essence of his delight lay in something that could not be commanded—or turned on like the hot-water tap for his convenience. Yet, was it right to be so happy? And if he really cared, why should he shrink from changing all the circumstances of both their lives? He ought to make a stand for his own idea of fitness: not just let things slide according to the whim of a mere girl, whom it was his business to guide. He had reached man's estate, and must behave in a manner befitting manhood which no chit of girl could possibly understand.

He drew himself up in obedience to this steadying thought and would at once have begun to act on it, quietly, of course, and without presumption, but at that very moment he was attacked, most unfortunately, by a nasty little bout of hiccoughs. The first hiccough passed unnoticed: the second elicited a word of sympathy. "Bad luck, old man!" The third advice: to hold his breath.

"How silly!" Mr. Buffum commented with truth, when, after a long minute's taut stillness, the small convulsion recurred with unabated vigour. They watched and waited and it came, exerting a strange fascination to the exclusion of other interests.

Niece rushed at him suddenly and shouted, "Boh!" as some think that shock is a sovereign remedy for this ailment. But it took no effect whatever: perhaps the patient was too used to being shocked by Niece.

The tiny seizure continued to shake him at regular intervals, until Marion suggested that Lucia should fetch a glass of water—but when she came back with it the attack had already passed with the mysterious suddenness of its coming.

"There you are, old man!" said Niece, drinking the water. "You can't even have the hiccoughs without being provoking. I'm going to bed. Good night!"

And she was gone.

Oddly enough, the slight lateness of the hour increased sharply Mr. Buffum's prickly discomfort, but again the magic happened and he knew the delight known only to the very shy man when he becomes sensitive, not to his grotesque self but to the presence of the other. He was drawn within the pleasant circle of her liking and appreciation: and in this atmosphere of what Methodists call liberty, he was quite clear in thought and speech on all those secret matters which Niece's bald statements had stirred to confusion. For their talk began with Marion speaking of Lucia, her youngness, her directness, her staunchness, her sense of fun, her power to appreciate the other fellow. Mr. Buffum glowed with pleasure: for one thing, he had never heard one woman, young or old, speak with such warmth and insight of another; it was a novel and refreshing experience, all the more so as the appreciation was mutual. He savoured it with relish, as a connoisseur savours an exquisite vintage.

Laughing, they agreed that blunt avowals and mighty claims between two people were clumsy and ridiculous compared with the gradual growth of trust and understanding—that delicate, delightful process. And so on. And so on. She spoke happily and openly to him: he spoke openly and happily to her.

And again, of course, the minutes ticked

by unobserved, and it was by accident that Mr. Buffum's eye saw the clock's face and his mind registered the actual hour, which was to him an unheard-of, an incredible hour, to be sitting up with any friend. He stared, startled. The hands pointed to ten minutes past two.

On the instant he visualised his terrible sister entering the room: saw the look of angry scorn on her face: heard her scathing voice: and all the rueful neighbours, all the friends and directors of his youth, the whole world of mocking cold critics, entered with her and pointed at him. Host in his own house, too.

Mr. Buffum rose, quailing.



"'Oh, before we go,' he began and faltered. . . . 'Before we go. There's one thing I feel I ought to say. I mean, I *want* to say. If you don't mind.'"

"Look at the time," he said in a weak voice.

Marion jumped up. "Good gracious!" she cried. "I am sorry. Fancy my keeping you up like this!"

Her assumption of the blame increased his sense of guilt, the existence even of which she did not realise at all. She was accustomed to late hours. He was not. Quite simple to her. She was sorry and said so. That was all.

It was not all to Mr. Buffum. It was too tremendously new to him. He felt that some amends must be made. What amends could a man make, who was serious and not light-hearted? What amends but the one? He slid down the hill at a terrific pace.

"Oh, before we go," he began and faltered. The room was full of spectral presences, some approving slyly, others approving unctuously, all approving most distastefully: but he must do the right thing. He struggled on: "Before we go. There's one thing I feel I ought to say. I mean, I *want* to say. If you don't mind. That is . . . there is a question I want to ask." He stopped, unable to proceed. She was not listening with great attention to his words. She took hold of his hand and held it and said simply:

"It's been so lovely. I have come to know you so much better."

Her remark acted like some ju-jitsu trick and threw him. What he desired to say seemed more fatuous and impossible than ever and yet more necessary to be said. He fought on from old habit of mind.

"What I mean is. I have long wanted to know. Perhaps you could tell me?"

His mind became a fantastic blur. He walked across the room and back again. He felt queer as though he had been taking gas at the dentist's, and he was coming to or going off. He pressed his temples, then blinked and brightened and said:

"Oh, yes. I have it. It's not of any importance. It always slips my mind. But can you tell me? Those glass milk-bottles they leave at the door. The little cardboard discs. Is there any way of removing them without splashing oneself with milk from top to toe?"

"Yes," she said. "There's a kind of instrument—sort of twirly little hook. Most handy. I'll send you one."

She stretched and sighed and said regretfully: "I suppose we had better turn in!"

"I think it would be wise," he agreed, and, stooping, kissed her hands.

"It all comes back to this," she began earnestly. "If only human beings could be simple enough . . ." She broke off laughing. "Oh, well! I mustn't start it all over again. . . . To be continued in our next!"

Mr. Buffum laughed happily.

"To be continued in our next!" he repeated, and she put her arms round his neck and kissed him good night.

FRIEND UNKNOWN.

WHERE hides the perfect friend that I must find,
The best-beloved, the trebly noble friend
For whom I would fling down my life to spend,
And who would fling me his, and laugh Death blind?
It may be now he comes as undivined
As one to Nazareth, one to Stratford End,
For neither fire nor shining stars portend
Who rides to meet me on the starry wind.

Some space all poets left unsoared, some prayer
All lovers left unmurmured for their dears,
Some high adventure all have left unplanned
Be mine for trying, so that though despair
Should bear me down with overwhelming tears,
I may be worthy, should he take my hand.

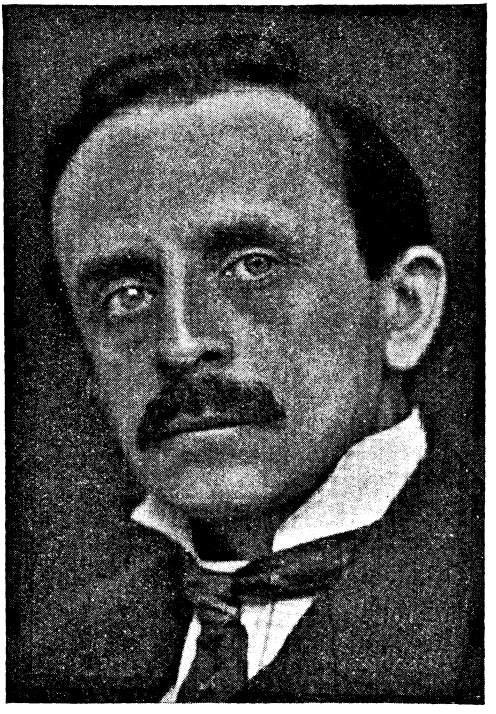
GEOFFREY JOHNSON

THE "BARRIE TOUCH"

By EDGAR MIDDLETON

Author of "Potiphar's Wife," "Tin Gods," and other plays

"IT was just after the publication of my first book, I strolled round—quite by accident, of course—to see how it looked on the bookstalls. At the first one I came to I found a young woman poring over a book. With a thrill I realised it was mine. I watched her, fascinated. She put it down, then picked it up again, as though unable to leave it. Then she opened it, hesitated and looked again. Just at that moment a good-looking young man came up. The book closed with a snap. Then I realised the brutal truth. She hadn't been interested in my book at all. She had merely been glancing in it to pass the time till he came."



[*G. C. Beresford.*

AN EARLY PORTRAIT OF SIR JAMES BARRIE, O.M.

It was Barrie himself who told the story years later at a public dinner. Probably never had a more distinguished company gathered together to do honour to one man. Cabinet ministers and statesmen rubbed elbows with business magnates of world-wide reputation, Society people and famous novelists and playwrights by the score. They listened entranced. That diminutive guest of honour with his gnome-like head, slow, rolling accent and quiet, dry humour held them spell-bound.

Authors popularly are supposed to be so shy and secretive; so different from what they write. One so often hears the question from an admiring reader: "What's he really like?" The author and the man seem to be two entirely different people. But with Barrie that is not the case. It is the author who is the man. He is exactly like what he writes. He certainly is shy and secretive; no one more so. The least interviewed celebrity, he hates publicity like the plague. The mere sight of a pressman or a camera makes him shrink into his shell like an oyster.

Men and supermen and the problem of going back to Methuselah do not interest him. He would only laugh at them. Those super-modern young men and short-haired cocktail-drinking young women he has no use for. He shows it in his plays. What Barrie is concerned with is the simple man and woman in the street, and preferably those he knows or spent his early life among. Looking out from his window in Thrums he finds the world a place of simple, honest, tender folk, each with his, and her, joys and sorrows, hopes and fears and own particular problem in life. He

writes always from personal experience. And he enjoys that supreme gift of taking the whole world into his confidence.

His literary career, in fact, has been one long autobiography. Nothing seems to have escaped him. There is no phase of his private life that has not furnished its quota either in the shape of an idea for a literary sketch, a character for a novel, or a plot for a play.

It is the same whether it is young manhood or middle age, his innermost thoughts and impressions are consigned to paper for everyone to read. Childhood reminiscences provided the material for a couple of early books, *Auld Licht Idylls* and *A Window in Thrums*. The name in the latter is derived from the ends of the warp threads in the weaving of which his family has been engaged for generations in his native town of Kirriemuir, for which it serves as a thin disguise.

He goes to Edinburgh. There is another book, *An Edinburgh Eleven*, a series of character studies of notable personalities during the time of his stay at the University.

At last—the dream of his youthful ambitions—after a spell as leader writer on the *Nottingham Journal* at £3 a week, he gets to London. The habit does not desert him. "Better Dead," that satirically quaint story, is nothing more than a personal diary of the hopes and disappointments of the young author struggling to get a foothold in the London newspapers and magazines.

"Immortal," Robertson Nicoll wires him about an instalment of his serialised version of "A Window in Thrums" for the *St. James's Gazette*. As though by magic his whole attitude changes. He does not seem to be the same man. *When A Man's Single*, his next book, is a striking contrast. Entirely a new Barrie is presented to the world. On the threshold of success and with an ever-growing confidence, a new note creeps in; a spark of the genius that later is to earn him world-wide fame.

But it is in his plays that Barrie most reveals himself. Reading between the lines, it is obvious that the story of John Shand, of the shabby topcoat and cockerty bonnet, in *What Every Woman Knows* is the story of the famous author's own youthful struggles.

One can imagine the David Wylie of Kirriemuir of those days saying of this brilliant son of a village weaver, winning scholarships to Dumfries Academy and then on to Edinburgh to take his M.A. degree: "A young Scotsman of your ability let loose upon the world with £300, what could he not do? It's almost appalling to think of, especially if he went among the English."

Or Barrie himself echoing John Shand, "glorified by experiences he has shared with many a gallant soul," that "my first year at college I lived on a barrel of potatoes and we had just a sofa-bed between two of us; when the one lay down the other had to get up. Do you think it was hardship? It was sublime."

It is true that John Shand went into politics. But even that might have been Barrie himself. The inclination was there. An ardent and lifelong Radical, Barrie is one of Lloyd George's closest friends. They are David and Jamie to one another. And it is an open secret that the famous author has frequently lent the Liberal leader the benefit of his advice at momentous crises in his career.

It was in playwriting that Barrie was to find his true métier. There he discovered to his unbounded delight that, once the little difficulty of mastering the technique of this new medium had been overcome, it offered the opportunity of reproducing all that accumulated store of characters, incidents and scenes of his early life and young manhood intact and in their life-like proportions; what was more, of voicing certain pronounced views that he held on various social subjects.

A typical Kirriemuir family, the Wylies, was imported into "What Every Woman Knows." Edinburgh memories were stirred once again to furnish a fragrant setting for "Quality Street." A worthy Scottish divine, an old friend of his father's, was pressed into service and immortalised as "The Little Minister."

There was Barrie in love in "The Professor's Love Story." This was followed in quick succession by Barrie on politics in "The Admirable Crichton," one of the earliest as it was one of the most effective Socialist tracts ever propagated. And Barrie in a rôle for which the world has never given him sufficient credit, the satirist in "Alice Sit-by-the-Fire," which was intended as a gentle leg-pull at the expense of the glut of sickly sentimental plays of that period.

Another powerful incentive to this new form of literary activity was a brother Scot, R. L. Stevenson's, advice to him, when still a young and struggling author: "The stage is the gold mine." Barrie proved it to the hilt. But at first, surprisingly enough,

dramatic success was long in coming. Most of Barrie's early plays have long since been forgotten.

His first essay was made in collaboration with Marriott Watson, when they unsuccessfully attempted to present Richard Savage as the hero of a romantic drama. A skit on the new pathological drama of that day, "Ibsen's Ghost," and "Jane Annie," a comic opera written in collaboration with Conan Doyle, met with little better result.

"Becky Sharp," an attempt to dramatise Thackeray, ran only a few weeks. "Walker, London," a farce about a barber on holiday who posed to a party in a houseboat as a famous man, turned the tide of financial success. But "The Professor's Love Story," produced in 1894, was the first work that might be described as a typically Barrie play.

To a stage that was dominated by Pinero's hard, glittering melodramas of high society, Ibsen's grim pathological studies, and Anglicised versions of risqué French farces, Barrie's plays of simple life, written with exquisite charm and tenderness, came as a welcome breath of fresh air. In fact, throughout his career as a playwright Barrie has always made a point of confining himself to the simplest possible subject.



[*Topical.*

SIR JAMES BARRIE AND THE LATE DAME ELLEN TERRY AT ST. ANDREWS UNIVERSITY.

"The Professor's Love Story," for instance, concerned itself with the clumsy efforts of a shy, retiring man of learning to win the love of a charming young woman. "The Admirable Crichton" showed the absurdities of our present social relationships and how on a desert island the butler became the master of the simple but well-meaning peer and his family. And in "What Every Woman Knows" the self-made man learns

from his unobtrusive little wife what every woman knows, that it was really she who made him.

Added to which Barrie was an exquisite craftsman. No one of his time could contrive a play with quite such finished artistry. He was the master stage carpenter. His was a genius for taking pains. Very frequently in rehearsal, when he discovered that the character in his play did not suit the temperament of the actor who was to play the part, he would sit down and rewrite the character to suit the actor.

His mingled tenderness and fresh racy humour, presented in that clear, nervous style, soon attracted world-wide attention. No other playwright in history perhaps enjoyed to the same degree his uncanny gift for making human nature see itself as it would like to be. He had a way of taking the most everyday incident and with a deft and unexpected twist converting it into a whimsical work of genius. The " Barrie touch," as it came to be known, many a fortunate manager was to discover, had a way of turning plays into gold.

Never was that famous touch more in evidence than in " Peter Pan." The idea had haunted its author since early childhood. He had already struggled with it in the form of a short story, " The Little White Bird," and then put it away dissatisfied. For years he had polished and rewritten, altered and changed the script. But always there had seemed to him to be something lacking.

Then at last it seemed to have come right. But still Barrie hesitated. There was so much of himself in " Peter Pan." It was like a man baring all his innermost and most intimate thoughts to the world; a love-letter offered for public inspection. Again there was the question of the public. Would they appreciate the delicate fantasy of it or merely laugh it to scorn ? Barrie could not bear the thought. Then circumstances intervened.

" Alice Sit-by-the-Fire " proved an unexpected failure. Charles Frohman, afterwards to go down in the ill-fated *Titanic*, pressed Barrie for another play to take its place. The only one that he had available was " Peter Pan." Again he hesitated. And it was only reluctantly, after hours of struggle with himself, that at last he consented to its presentation.

Success was instant and overwhelming. On all hands the play was acclaimed as a masterpiece. Offers for the rights poured in from all parts of the world. The London production, intended only for a limited season, ran on into weeks and months. Next year it was revived, and again the next year. " Peter Pan " succeeded in doing what no other play had ever done before, being revived every year since its production.

Not a little of its success was due to the fact that feeling in the country at that moment was just ripe for such a theme. Somehow " Peter Pan " seemed to sum up the hopes and aspirations, the whole outlook of the average Englishman. Barrie soon found himself a national hero. It was the same in every English-speaking country throughout the world. Only the Latin races did not seem to take to the play. To them it was merely childish. They could not understand it. In Paris, for example, to this day any attempt to stage Barrie's greatest masterpiece has always proved a failure.

From that time Barrie never looked back. Successful before, his literary career now was one long triumph. It was nothing for two, and even three, of his plays to be running in London at the same time ; also in New York and other parts of the world. The royalties he earned from amateur dramatic productions alone would have seemed a fortune to the average author. Probably no other writer in history ever has made such a fortune merely with the efforts of his pen.

Now financially assured, Barrie entered upon the third and final stage of his career as a playwright. He no longer cared about public opinion. It was necessary no more to stoop to the usual theatrical devices that make a play saleable. He wrote to please himself. What was surprising was that the plays he wrote for his own amusement proved as successful as the plays he had written for the amusement of the public.

" A Kiss for Cinderella " was the first. This fantasy of a slum child's dream of herself as Cinderella coming true, that was shown in a series of unbelievable events which, starting in a studio, passed on to the interior of a slum and then to a public street and a ballroom, and culminated in that poignant, moving scene in a hospital ward, left the public enchanted.

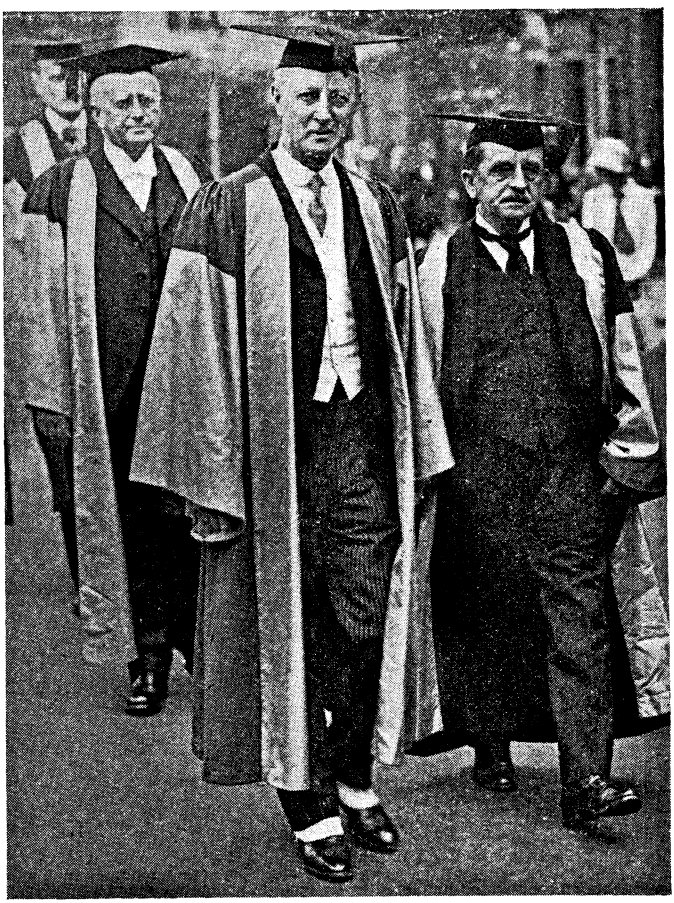
An equally successful run was achieved by " Mary Rose," and " Dear Brutus," the idea of which was supplied by Shakespeare's famous line, " The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars, but in ourselves that we are underlings," and dealt with the use that eight

disappointed people made of a second chance in life, proved the most popular of all.

Then at last Barrie called a halt. There is no suggestion of any further new work by him. None is expected. That big chest in his library, that is full to the lid with unpublished manuscripts, is not likely to yield its closely-guarded secrets, at least not till the author's death. Then probably he will have taken the precaution to have burnt them beforehand. He has always threatened to. The hermit of the Adelphi has shrunk more than ever into his shell.

Now he only emerges into the outer world for his occasional walks down Fleet Street and around the City, particularly after lunch on Sunday. Then, lost in thought, his hands clasped behind his back, the famous briar gripped firmly between his teeth, the best known and most loved literary man of his time, he passes through the jostling crowds unheeded and unrecognised.

Or sometimes during the summer months there is an excursion up to Lord's to watch the cricket. No official entertainment to visiting teams from Australia or South Africa is complete without him. No guest is more honoured or more welcome. The Australians, in particular, have come to look on his speech of welcome, packed with dry humour and sly digs at their expense, as one of the events of the tour. And it is a never-to-be-forgotten privilege to see that small figure, one foot on a chair and his cigar held at a rakish angle behind his ear, addressing that roomful of bronzed and appreciative athletes, an expert on their own game.



[*Topical.*

SIR JAMES BARRIE AND SIR HENRY NEWBOLT AT OXFORD.

As is inevitable with a man of Barrie's temperament and romantic career, myths innumerable have grown up around him that

have made of flesh and blood a figure of romance almost as illusory as the fay heroes and heroines of his own creation.

His passionate love of children has become a byword. There were the two adopted wards for whose education he bore the entire expense at Eton and Oxford, and a thousand and one smaller kindnesses to young people in humbler walks of life, accounts of which from time to time have crept into the columns of the public press. Above all, there is the case of the young gentleman of twelve who, wanting to get a part in "Peter Pan," solemnly presented Barrie with a card on which was printed: "Master Johnny Smith, Drury Lane Theatre, Christmas pantomime, hind legs of the elephant."

But then stories about "Peter Pan" would fill a volume. How Barrie presented the lucky young man who gave him the idea for that now famous line with a half-penny royalty on every performance of the play; how that tiny royalty soon assumed the proportions of a modest income, and how—but space does not permit. To-day the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children enjoys a good income from the famous play, which Barrie made over to the Trustees a year or so ago in its entirety.

Equally famous is his lifelong duel with Bernard Shaw, who lived opposite to him in the Adelphi for over twenty years. It is said that the famous dramatist, one day entertaining a visitor who wanted to meet Barrie, threw a roll of bread at his window. In due course Barrie appeared. "Well, Shaw?" he inquired. "What is it? Throwing bread on the waters of tribulation, or is this merely an invitation to the feast?"

Whatever Barrie the man may be, Barrie the author is no myth. For success and popularity his career as a playwright is unequalled in his own time. Two at least of his plays will rank as masterpieces. No man could ask for more.

MOUNTING.

THE steps on which men climb
To heights vulgar or sublime
Are hewn of rugged stone,
Narrow and dark where one alone
May fear to creep
Along the passage steep.

Betimes some light may dart across the stair—
A golden light. The climber knows not where
The source, the reason nor yet the aim,
Yet 'tis to him a guiding flame
Yielding an outlook clear,
Pointing a summit near.

Darkness, then light, again the dark
Forbidding him a forwardness to mark;
Scarce shall he know until another ray
Chances to fall across the rough stairway
How near his feet may be
To the attainment of high destiny.

H. MACAULAY.

HOW TO KEEP FIT

A Series of Simple Exercises

By Elisabeth Partington M.P.C. London

Photographs by Hana, London.

4TH SET: EXERCISES FOR PROMOTING VITALITY.

FEW people keep the skin fully alive; hence the body does not rid itself of effete poisonous matter. These exercises should be followed by friction, using either the hands or friction brushes, and letting the air come freely in contact with the skin. No amount of air can give you cold. If you "catch cold" the poison is there before your contact with the air. With plenty of air and a well-balanced but not too liberal diet, illness would soon be almost banished.

Wild animals live altogether outdoors, getting fresh air day and night. In winter food is scarce, consequently they cannot stuff themselves and are forced to work harder for what food they secure. Being always either hunted or hunting, they are alert and active, and come forth in the spring unencumbered with excess nutriment.

More activity, less food and more air, night and day, would ensure health to all.



1ST EXERCISE.

Lie on the back with knees drawn up.

Raise the body in centre of back, resting on the hands and crown of head.

Then raise alternate legs as shown.

This exercise develops the neck and strengthens the back.



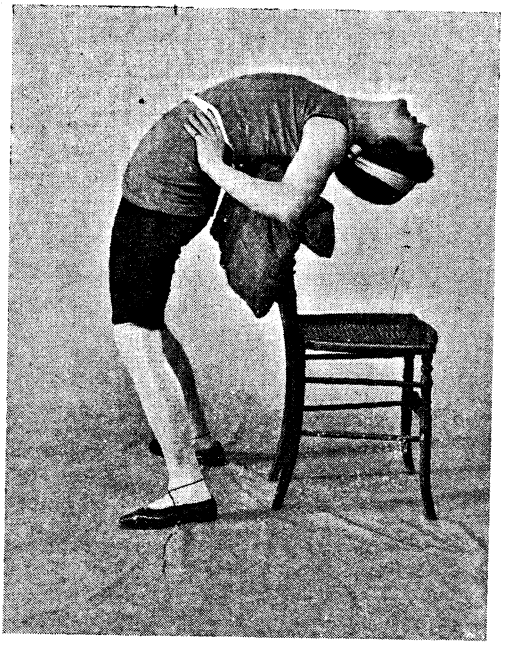
2ND EXERCISE.

Stand with feet apart, both arms stretched upward.

Twist the body so that the right hand touches the left heel as shown, with left arm stretched up behind.

Rise, bringing arms upward, and repeat on opposite side.

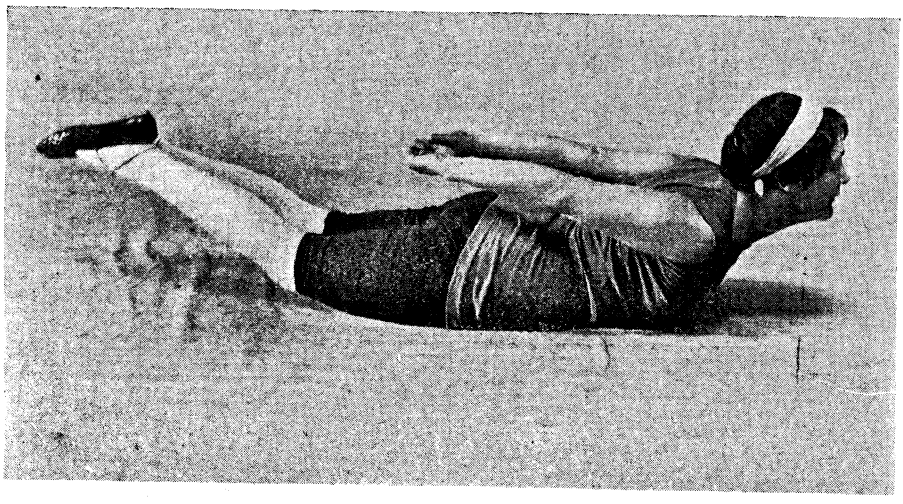
The trunk is twisted from left to right, thoroughly massaging liver and stomach.



3RD EXERCISE.

Stand about a foot from a chair, hands resting on hips, bend the body backward, touching the back of the chair with spine.

This exercise will make a weak spine strong and reduce the abdomen.

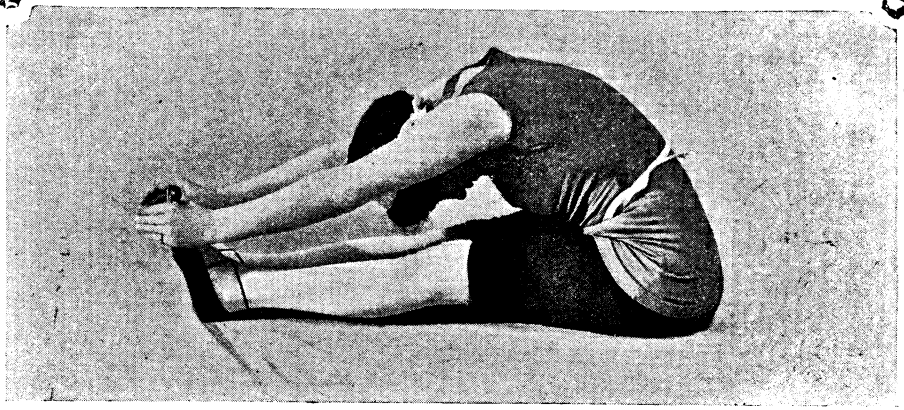


4TH EXERCISE.

Lie face downward, hands clasped behind at the waist.

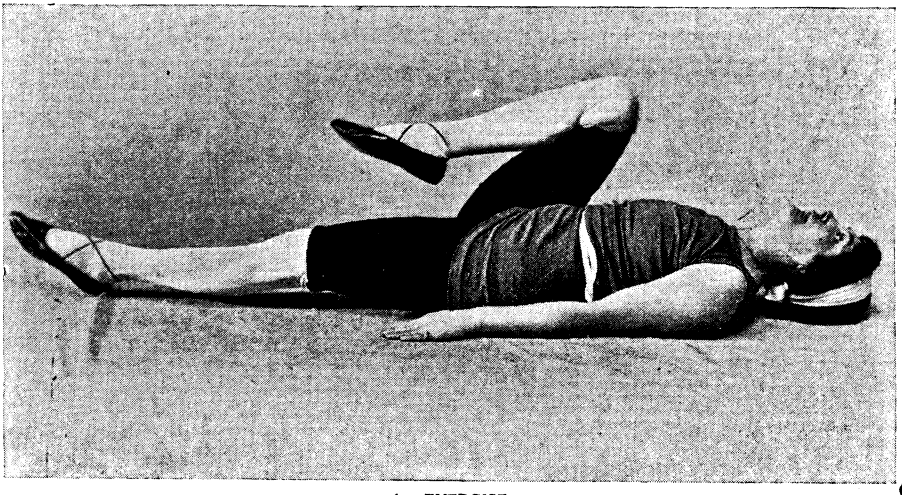
Raise the head and legs as high as possible, pushing the arms outward, then relax and lie flat again. Repeat twenty times.

This is for the shoulders and spine.



5TH EXERCISE.

From a sitting position with arms raised, bend forward, touching the toes. Return to sitting position and repeat.
This exercise will, if continued, make supple the lumbar region of the spine.



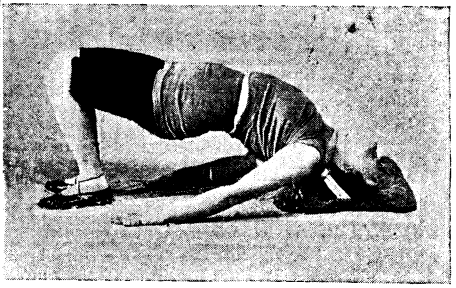
6TH EXERCISE.

Lie on the back, bringing each leg alternately bent upward, as illustrated.
This exercise is for making the legs supple and for improving the respiration and circulation. It should be done fairly quickly.



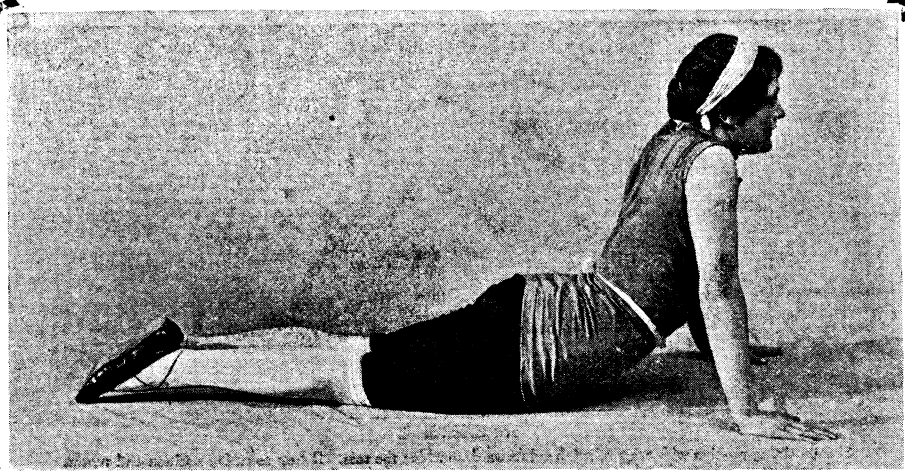
7TH EXERCISE.

From a sitting position, with hands behind the head, bend forward, touching each knee with the head as shown.
This exercise is for reducing and for strengthening internal organs generally.



8TH EXERCISE.

Lie on the back and draw the knees up in bent position.
Raise and lower the body, each time resting on top of the head.
This exercise is for strengthening the neck.



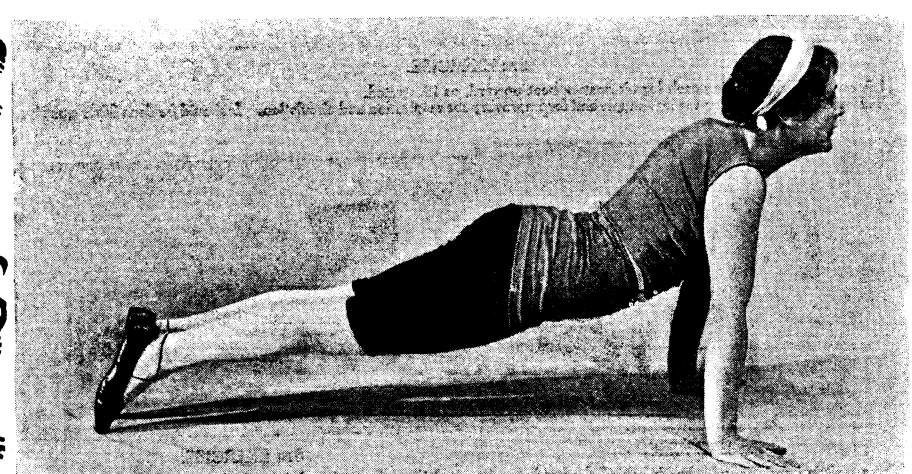
9TH EXERCISE.

Lie face downward with hands flat.
Raise the body on the hands and toes, making sure to keep the trunk quite stiff.
For strengthening the lower part of the back and beautifying the shoulders.



10TH EXERCISE.

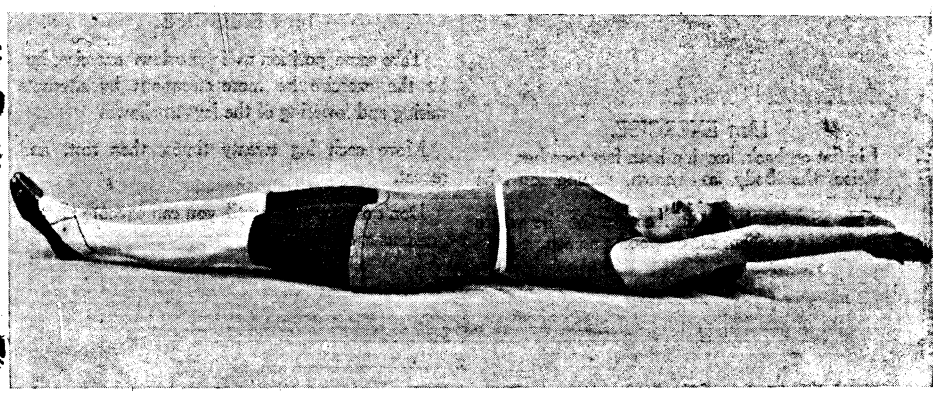
Lie on the side and swing alternate legs backward with arm upward, then arm backward and leg forward.
Repeat ten times, then turn on opposite side and repeat.
For promoting suppleness of hips and shoulders.



11TH EXERCISE.

Assume position shown, then raise alternate straight legs as high as possible.
This exercise strengthens the neck and the calves of the legs and reduces the hips.





12TH EXERCISE.

Poor breathing is possible even with a large strong chest. The function requires to be properly exercised.

Deep breathing is a strong movement and needs effort.

Three or four deep breaths are enough to begin with.

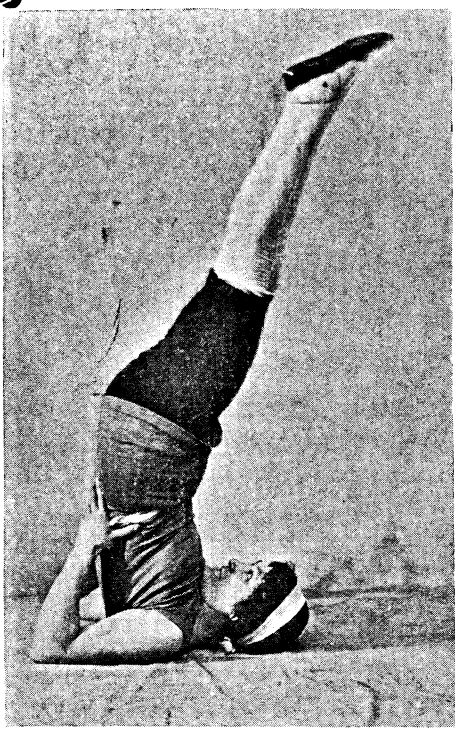
Always inhale through the nose, and exhale slowly through the mouth.

Always breathe abdominally.

The lungs become filled with oxygen, and deep breathing is a wonderful nerve-soother.

The first illustration shows where breathing begins in the abdomen; at the same time the arms are being raised.

The second shows a full breath being taken from abdomen to chest. With arms fully raised, exhale slowly, then lower the arms.

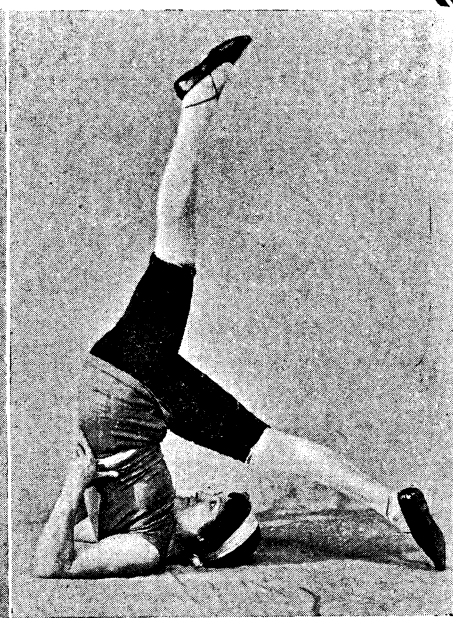


13TH EXERCISE.

Lie flat on back, keeping both feet together.

Raise the body as shown, resting on the shoulders.

This exercise is to gain control of the whole body, and is excellent for dropped stomach.

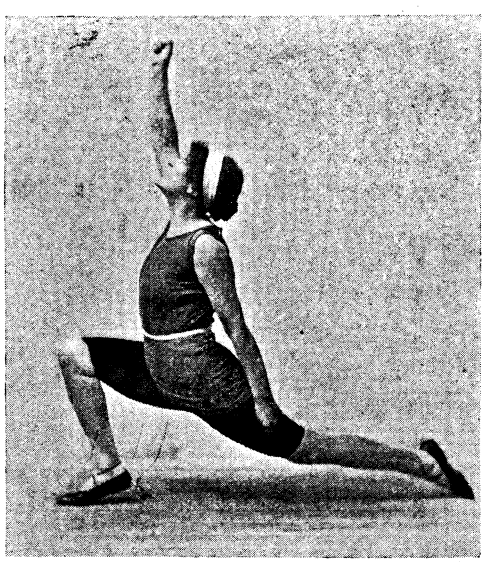


14TH EXERCISE.

Take same position as in previous exercise, but let the exercise be more strenuous by alternate raising and lowering of the legs as shown.

Move each leg twenty times, then rest, and repeat.

Don't attempt this until you can execute all the previous exercises.



15TH EXERCISE.

This is a strenuous exercise and must be done with care.

Lunge as far forward as you can with the right foot, taking care to keep the left quite straight, the right arm upward, left arm down.

Take notice how both legs rest on the toes.

The whole body is contracted. This is a wonderful exercise for the calves and thighs, and all round the centre of the body.

Maintain position for ten seconds, then rest, and repeat on opposite side.

THE FIRE-WALKER

By JOHN RUSSELL

ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED SINDALL

I.

ABOUT a white man going into the tropics to abolish himself, there is one drawback. As a theory it would seem quite simple and reasonable—and so indeed it is. But there remains a definite difficulty in the strangeness of these places.

Between Capricorn and Cancer almost anything is possible. Death is easy: but life is easy, too. And you have to encounter happenings of an outlandish sort—the customs and the climate and the other white men thereabouts—often different and often highly surprising. So a chap is troubled with such awful hangovers.

This was the sum of Jamison's observation, which should possess a certain scientific value. For five months Jamison—a tall young man—had been engaged in an earnest attempt to attain abolition at the bar of McDougal's Hotel, in the town of Suva, in the Fiji Islands. He had not yet succeeded because—fact, fancy or fantasy—something was always confusing the business so that he had to start all over again.

Otherwise and in many ways Suva should have proved a perfect duck of a place for Jamison's purpose. It is one of the wide-open colonial ports of the Pacific where thirsty characters most do congregate. It is the centre of a copra-and-sugar archipelago of primitive charm, and its planters are generally large, loose and broad-minded individuals whose only prejudice is in favour of allowing the native races to carry the white man as a burden. Their profits are good, and when they come to town for their periodic busts they do considerable busting. And when they imbibe, like the elephant they *im*bibe. And any casual cadger for drinks who can offer any bar-room entertainment to keep them amused is also free to partake at their expense.

This was where Jamison came in—and this was commonly how he passed out. He could dance, in a fashion to match his sailor garb. He could sing, with a wistful sweetness. He had a song—the theme for his unhappy pilgrimage to this far end of the world, perhaps. "Whiskey Johnny," he could sing:

> "Oh, whiskey is the life of man—
> Whiskey, Johnny!
> Oh, I'll drink whiskey while I can—
> Whiskey for my Johnny!"

Whereat the sugar-and-copra kings would roar and stamp and set 'em up to the final conclusion—most of them.

(Though some might not. Some might be a bit shamed at such a voice and such a manner in such a hole. At the same time not meaning much, either. For it is a rule, and a fair rule too—pretty largely in this world's illusion—that gentlemen are cheap, but a man has first to be a man.)

However:

Such generosity served Jamison very well. He worked for it, and it was his pay. All very well—except for the lapses afterward. Ah! The lapses! The awful moments when the poor, battered consciousness must bestir itself and pluck up drowned Memory by the locks. Awful—the mornings after! . . .

One particular morning as Jamison opened his eyes he was lying on a tattered leather couch in a corner of McDougal's billiard-room.

It is a vast barrack at the back of McDougal's bar: by night an airless inferno occupied by noisy devils vainly endeavouring to make three-cushion shots with six-sided balls: during the daytime generally abandoned to silence, dust, spiders, centipedes, and such drunks as have been peacefully bedded away there. But it is really a tremendous room, with the height and depth and upper clerestory windows of a baronial hall, all mysterious and cobwebby.

Whereby you may understand how Jamison, when he did open his eyes, might dwell for a moment in the same baronial illusion. . . .

Somebody was shaking him awake. A girl. He gazed up at her, and he saw her face in a dim nimbus. "*Contessa!*" he murmured. "Cleo—my darling! Oh, good heavens—*carissima*. . . . How did you ever find me?"

She was only Josie, the Sydney-side barmaid.

At the names he called her, she first looked at him sharply and tossed her head in a quaint, inimitable way she had. Even a barmaid does not care to be mistaken for some fictional heroine from the pages of a shilling romance! Though it should be told of Josie herself that she adored shilling romances—with no more than a modest suspicion that her own life was stranger than any fiction at any price. . . . Still, and all, it was hardly flattering of him to forget her so soon—was it?

But presently she relented.

"'Ere, you boy!" she said with her startling clear voice. "Never mind all such. You sit up and tyke this off." She held a goblet of iced milk. "Take it stryte—d'y' hear?"

He heard, and he obeyed. He took it with trembling lips while she supported his head with one cool, expert hand. He gulped, and blinked at her with returning recognition. "Oh, thanks," he gasped. "Oh—I needed that! It's awf'ly good of you, Miss Josie. . . . I'm sorry—I—for a minute I was dreaming of someone else, you know!"

"Never mind all such," she repeated, primly. "The thing is—where 'uv you been?"

"Miss Josie," he answered, with mere sincerity. "I've been in hell. . . . Josie—you've no notion!"

This was the chap as she had known him about the bar for the last months—the same derelict who first had intrigued her with his courtesy. And she felt the same surge of something secret and pitiful to see him so.

Nevertheless, she tossed her head again in strict independence of comment. "You? . . . Wot t' hell do *you* know about 'ell? . . . Hoh! But that ain't it." She took a quick little bird-like look around her. She was like a bird herself: wee and sleek. She wore an impeccably neat, close-fitting mohair dress—cheap but good for the tropics (trust Josie to know!), and about her white neck a narrow white band, fresh and spotless—for that was the way she kept herself, tropics or no tropics. Her hair, it was drawn close in a glinting crown like a dove's breast, and her eyes were dark and wide and absolutely fearless. Yes—meaning Josie in her own defiant, undefeated small self—fearless: as she always must have been through chance or mischance whatsoever. And fearless, too, was that funny little voice of hers, with its tinkling, bell-like note, though just now toned down to some pressing anxiety.

"Lissen, you. Didn't I tip you last night to imshi-off out'a here? Didn't I tell you to go 'ide y'rself some other plyce under cover? . . . After wot you done in the bar-room!"

Jamison regarded her blankly.

"After wot y' done to Tavua McEwen last night!" she urged. "Don't you remember?"

Quite evidently he did not. "Who—ah—who is Mr. McEwen?"

"Oh, my fright!" (Josie's own pet, particular swear.) "When you smacked him such a beauty on the kisser. . . . And you forgot it a'ready?" she cried.

Quite evidently he had, and once more the implication was not flattering—was it?—that the hero should so easily forget the cause of his heroism. Alas, at the present moment there could hardly have been a poorer figure for a hero than Jamison. . . . Still, and all, Josie continued her effort to enlighten him.

"Lissen. 'Tavua'—that's the title of T. V. McEwen in Fiji. See? He owns about 'arf of it. Anyw'y, he can do just about as he ruddy well likes in this country. And so 'e will if he ever gets hold of you. He'll devil th' life out of you—no error!"

"Ah?" inquired Jamison, mistily. "And why?"

"'Struth! Because you smacked him."

"Ah? . . . And why did I do that?"

"Why——?" For an instant Josie's face flamed scarlet—as much from exasperation as from the natural reticence of her firm little heroine soul in telling such things, perhaps. "Well, if I must say—because he was gettin' mussy with me be'ind the bar when you come in. And I *will* say you acted like a gent. Much obliged to you, and all. But I ain't a-feared of him myself—not though he is a dirty dorg. No! Never mind me. . . . Wot I'm a-feared of is wot'll appear if he ever catches *you*!" she hurried on. "And that's why you got to imshi out'a here, quick time. . . . Come on, now. Quick!"

With sudden strength she raised him: with her eager young arms she supported

him across the room towards the rear exit. She had him almost out when he took hold on a table-rim. And there he clung, though he had begun to shake a little. "Thanks so much, Miss Josie," he said, gently. "Awf'ly kind of you. But I—really, you know, I can't go any further without a bracer. I really need some sort of a—a drink, you know!"

It was doubtless fitting that the poor wretch's own gesture should have assured his own damnation. Josie had done her best for him: Josie might even have saved him then. But it was not to be. For in the same instant Tavua McEwen himself came sauntering untimely into the billiard-room through the bar-room door.

A big man was T. V. McEwen. Rather flabby and red-faced, but a striking figure, too, in his swaggering manner of khaki riding-breeches and mud-splashed boots and a flare-open shirt. He always dressed that way. He had been known to attend official teas at Government House in such a garb, and quite distinguished tourists passing through Suva had been quite impressed with the hearty, loud, genial fellow. . . . It is a piece with the institution of Colonial snobbery that "one of our successful island planters—a self-made millionaire" need never pretend to anything else. Most people care very little what sort of Simon Legree he may have been. Actually, they rather prefer the Simon Legree touch—let the fellow only act his part with shrewdness and with humour.

As T. V. entered from the bar it so happened that he was carrying in one hand his whalebone riding-crop and in the other a full whiskey glass. It further happened that he was just in time to overhear Jamison's plea. "What's this—what's this? . . . A drink?" he echoed with the purring rumble characteristic of him. He came and planted himself and looked the derelict up and down in a glow of hostility which was partly instinctive and innate and partly related to a fresh purple bruise over the left side of his jaw. "You say you need a drink, young man?"

The two were about of a height; but the lithe muscles that might have made Jamison a match for him in some moment of inspiration, in this moment were now gone twitching and nerveless. Tavua noted the fact: noted—too—how the wanderer's gaze fatefully wandered toward the full whiskey glass. And Tavua grinned.

"Well, well. Now I'll recommend something quite different. Between smart people like you and me. Hey? Yes. You stoushed me last night when I wasn't expecting—when I was overtook on my pins a bit. . . . It's a score you have to settle, m' lad. You recollect that much?"

Alack! Jamison recollected nothing—person, nor event, nor motive.

"What you need is a dam' good thrashing!" suggested T. V. "Either that, or get you slung in jail to eat bugs off the wall! . . . But the thrashing would be more fun!"

He began to tap his boot with the riding-crop, when a small fury burst . . .

"Don't you touch him, Tavua!" With her little fists clenched and her dark eyes flashing. "Don't you lay the end of that whip on 'im!"

"Josie," said Tavua, "you keep out o' this."

"You fancy for a minute I'll let you 'ammer a gent like that? . . . The shape 'e's in?"

"Josie," he repeated, amused, "keep out!"

"No!" she stormed. "Not if you try any of y'r dorg's tricks on him. He was a better man than you larst night for a fair knock-out. . . . You try and touch him now!"

"Why?" he asked, to tolerate her. "What do you think you could do about it—hey?"

"I'll stop you some'ow. My fright, I will! If I have to bring everybody in Suva on the run."

"You mean you'll kick and scream?" he interpreted in the caressing tone of provocation. He was enjoying himself, playing with the situation: no Simon Legree savouring the salt of life could have failed to enjoy the melodrama she injected so quaintly. But there was a significance more sinister in the way he let his heavy-lidded gaze possess her vibrant, slight body. "Well, you won't, my dear. You won't because you're not the kind that kicks and screams."

"Ah?" The observation came from Jamison, in a polite attempt at playfulness. "Ah—how true. Of course she's not that kind. But what a gift she has at serving glasses 'round!"

As a bid for attention, it went unnoticed. The other two had a sharper issue between them. "And another thing," continued Tavua, holding her with the mastery of his look, "—another thing, you won't because you wouldn't dare. . . . You see: you

forget what I started to tell you last night in the bar."

"When he smacked you such a good 'un!"

"He did," admitted Tavua, but glowing over her (the big, jovial and hateful man). "He did, and he'll pay for it before I've done with him, never fret! But meanwhile, what I started to tell *you*, my love—I've found out why you came five months ago, such a charming, adventurous barmaid looking for a job in the far places. Yes. I've found what drove you out of Sydney and brought you here to Suva!"

This time Josie went white—whiter than her own dainty neck-band. "'Dunno wot y're talking about."

"Oh yes, you do, my dear. Anyway, you can guess. I had the luck yesterday to dig up the copy of an old Sydney newspaper. A *Sydney Herald*, of a date about five months ago. Hey? Silly of you to keep that paper in your trunk, girlie—with the footy little lock on your room upstairs! Because I always did wonder what you had skipped for—a tabby of your class. . . . Well, I got it," he purred with sheer pleasure. "I read all about that murder on Arundel Street last July. And the scandal—and the witness who was so badly wanted by the police and couldn't be traced? H'm? I read her whole description! . . . Now what have you got to say, sweetheart?"

"Yes," nodded Jamison, solemnly, clinging to his table-top. "That's what we want to know—if it's going to be on the house, and how soon."

Again, nobody gave him any notice. Josie was facing Tavua. It might have been merely courage in desperation, but she faced him with her level, pure brow and the same undaunted toss of her head. If she caught a sharp breath, when she answered she held the same tinkling clarity of a small bell rung out. "I ain't going to jaw with you. Whatever y're gettin' at—and a sneakin' thief too, it seems. . . . All I got to say is—*you keep your 'ands off that gent!*"

Certainly T. V. McEwen was having a lot of fun this morning, in his fun-loving way. "'Gent'? Well, well. A 'gent' you're bound he should be—to make up the story, hey? Well, well. . . . The Beachcomber and the Barmaid, we'll call it. What? The Duke and the Damsel in Distress. Why, it's a sweet yarn, to be sure. . . . And such a handsome duke as you picked for yourself!"

True, the specimen, whatever you chose to name him, made a sad specimen indeed. All this while he had remained hanging to his table like a castaway sailor to a raft, swinging dizzily in his own obsession. Josie turned to him with something even of hope, perhaps. But when she looked at him she winced. Aye, she winced as she had not done at any sneer or threat to herself.

Tavua caught it. Probably it gave him his next notion. A really grand notion, too. Satisfying the situation in shrewdness and in humour alike.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he cried. "We'll leave it to him. Hey? How's that? We'll leave it to the duke himself. . . . Here y' are, m' lad!"

In one fist he showed the glass of liquor—in the other he showed the riding-crop.

"Free choice. A fight or a frolic. Pick it y'rself, and nobody's crowding you. . . . What d'y' think?"

Who could have told what Jamison thought, or whether Jamison was capable of thinking anything at all? There he clung between his natural enemy and his only friend, and the issue was the merest gauge of manhood. He had to choose. By whatever warning was left him on the darkling sea of his perception he had to make some choice, some signal.

He hesitated. Through any lingering gift of grace as may be, it stands to be recorded that he did hesitate. . . . Then his fingers started shaking again, and he said "Thanks so much!" in his courteous way. "Thanks so much. Awf'ly kind of you," he said. And he reached for the glass.

But Tavua held off. He made play with the drink, rolling it delicately so that the dusty sunlight came through in an amber sparkle and the fumes expanded, insidious.

"O' course you'll sing for it . . .?"

"Oh, of course!" The poor castaway. Even this crowning humiliation meant nothing to him now. He accepted.

"Of course—if you ask me."

With an effort, he brought himself to a bearing. With his youthful voice and his gentle, haunted face uplifted he began to sing.

Whiskey Johnny was what he sang:

> "Oh, whiskey good and whiskey strong—
> Whiskey, Johnny!
> Oh, I'll drink whiskey all day long—
> Whiskey with my Johnny!"

Whereat Tavua laughed. And laughed and laughed, and handed over the liquor straightway. "Why, very good. Why, to



"'All I got to say is—*you keep your 'ands off that gent!*'"

be sure—very good indeed. Quite the entertainer! I'll see you get your proper ration for that, m' boy. . . . Josie," he added. "Serve our tramp friend here with the whole bottle—or as much more as he can soak up at any one time. At my expense, understand. . . . Cheap, I call it." He glowed over them both—the big, genial and dangerous man. And as he turned away and went swaggering out, he still went laughing, like one in the expectation of ample further enjoyment to come. "My colonial oath—yes. Cheap enough!"

II.

So this was how Jamison did definitely lapse into his own personal hell, as he had claimed himself, in Suva of the Fijis. Most ports of the mid-Pacific are familiar with such white men, who have found their levels of shame and degradation and who manage to persist therein. More or less comfortably, if the truth be told. For it is another element in the tropical fantasy that while life and death are easy, damnation is easier yet. That everything—as dear Louis Becke used to say—"everything is so blame' casual!"

But to be casual is damnation itself to a white man, with his grim obligation of work, duty and civilisation, and it is curious to ask what becomes of these chaps in sterner and bleaker climes. How fares the beachcomber, for instance, on the beach at Oslo—or at Punta Arenas? The answer is of course that he does not fare at all. Only here where the curse of labour is lifted and the sun shines bright on your old Stone-Age home—among such lovely, forgotten islets, the mirage of an earthly paradise—only here the poor sinner may be seen to delay his entry on eternal torment by lingering in a modified purgatory. Very often, too, quite in spite of himself.

Consider him; this sinner as he arrives in these ports. He arrives, generally speaking, as a runaway from something. It may be a sheriff, a wife or a tailor's bill—it may be a warrant for murder, or the sight of tall buildings, or the image of a lover's illusion. Anyway, he never wants to see it again. Anyway, he wants to be quit of it for ever. He is a fugitive seeking oblivion, but seeking—humanly enough—with the craving for tragic drama. Broken, defiant or merely poetic, as his case may be—seeking some last stupendous flourish to make his exit memorable. And what does he find?

Why, he finds that nothing is memorable and that nobody cares very much. To a colony of hard-headed traders he is discounted in advance. No audience is waiting to listen to him, no cinemas and no newspapers are ready to record his suffering. There comes no knocker at his door except the balmy trade wind, no alarm except the lullaby murmur of the surf. The breadfruit grows for anybody's breakfast and the cocoanut for anybody's tea. It begins to get so lazily hot about nine in the morning and it begins to get so lazily cool about nine at night: the hour for any desperate wickedness seems really never to occur. Day and night the land lapped in silver and green, scattered with jewels of foam or rain or dew on its warm flesh—a drowsy courtesan always smiling an invitation. He finds himself like the lotus-eater, overcome with ease. He finds himself like the fabled knight who went forth slashing with vorpal sword in hand, and who went down swooning amid rose petals.

Of course if he were a Malay or a bugis or a Chinese in the same frame of mind, he would have a perfectly natural outlet. He could run amok. He could run gorgeously amok until somebody cut off his head or transfixed him on the point of a spear—thereby terminating his drama with a highly satisfactory punctuation. But such effects of rhetoric are somehow racially denied to a white man: and so he does lapse. So he does lapse and he does persist as a tolerated outcast in the middle state of worthlessness—truly the white man's casual hell. For nobody really cares. . . .

Least of all do the natives care.

Consider these for a moment: the original inhabitants of these islands. From far before recorded history they were a stalwart, manly, and spirited people, neither Afric nor Mongol, who were free and content in their God-given environment. To them the first white man appeared like a miracle out of the sky, with a hymn-book and a shot-gun. Because they possessed neither weapon, they submitted once for all to be ruled, exploited and painted pink on the map of Empire. It is true that their old gods have been utterly blasted and their old beliefs relegated to a museum. It is true that they are now mostly good church-goers and tithe-payers, wearing shoes and hats and Mother Hubbards on a Sunday morn. It is also true that they still know what they knew in the far, dim past: strange and unaccountable miracles of their own.

They know about the Turtle and the Shark, for instance, those visible spirits which always respond to the remorseful cry of the children—even when scientific naval officers stand by with loaded cameras. They know about the *balolo* which gives them a big fishing on every stated date, while baffled astronomers cannot conceive how a mere sea-worm can keep both solar and lunar time. They know about Dakawaqa, the big devil of the sea, to whom you had better sacrifice a root of the yaqona plant when you are navigating certain channels, or you will infallibly be wrecked. They know many, many strange things between Capricorn and Cancer (where almost anything can happen)—and in the strangeness of these places they retain the assurance of their own knowledge.

Then wherefore should they care what becomes of any white man, brute or fool, drunk or sober, whoever or whatever he may be? . . .

Certainly, Corporal Kalita would have said he did not care.

Corporal Kalita drew up at the side-door in the alley by McDougal's Hotel that afternoon, trundling a hand-cart. The day was hot even for Suva, and the hand-cart piled with rice and flour bags and biscuit tins made a heavy load. But that was not why Kalita sweated. He had the impassive, bronze eagle face and something of the wire-drawn, wire-limbed quality of a Roman legionary. He sweated because he was wearing an old woollen uniform about half an inch thick, frayed and faded: one of those impervious, clay-coloured, field service uniforms as issued to H.M.'s troops during the late War.

Such a garb under the Fijian sun is just about as suitable as a horse blanket. Yet Kalita would sooner have gone naked than not have worn it in Suva streets. For this was a relic of the Fiji Contingent, which served proudly and honourably from Taranto to Flanders.

To be sure, among his own people on his own island he had a pride of his own—the pride of Tui-qalita, a titular chief. To be sure, there was little pride in his present employment. Not that he cared—oh, no! . . . And yet, in a very human way he did care, enormously. . . . For this was one badge which no white man could take from him—even as a beast of burden between the shafts of a cart.

"Kalita . . .!" rumbled a bull voice.

He set down his cart. From the top-floor window above him projected a red face with a beard of shaving foam like some ugly gargoyle. "Kalita—you dam' black loafer. I told you to come early and pick up my luggage!"

Kalita answered, impassive. "Goods not ready, sar."

"You're a liar!" observed T. V., on his usual hearty principle. "You've been shirking again. I'll have the hide off you yet! . . . Now get what I say. I've ordered three more cases of wines and such at the Stores. Stop and pick 'em up on your way to the wharf."

"Huh, sar."

"Then tell the cook I'll be over there to-night. Guests coming for dinner. . . . Not on that stinking launch, the way you keep it, you lazy swine!"

"Huh, sar."

"Yes. But if you break down again going across the Bay, I'll teach you how to run that engine. With a spanner over your thick head! . . . Understand me?" he added, with a few more choice expletives.

Kalita understood well enough. Whatever else he might be, he was a trained non-com.—educated in a mission school. He had learned even the expletives. But he had also learned to stand fast under them.

"Then hop up here and get my bags!"

Nevertheless, Kalita made no great haste. Once out of sight of the gargoyle, inside the hotel, he lingered to explore pad-footed on some secret quest of his own, through the halls and the back bar—until he peered into the billiard-room. And there he saw the one he sought.

Josie stood there, a finger to her lip.

"Kalita . . ." (How different a voice!)

"Yes, Missi——!"

The dusty lights from overhead cast down a radiance about her in little spangles and crumbs of gold. Heaven only knows how she seemed to Corporal Kalita, to Tui-qalita—this reclaimed savage, this child of the seas and the stars—with what known saint or ancient goddess he identified her. But she was very beautiful. She had the beauty, quaint and ethereal, of a figure stepped out from a window of stained glass. And Kalita with that vision before him paid homage, inclined himself, in a dignified gesture that seemed to lay the whole man at her feet.

"Kalita!" She beckoned breathlessly. "Kalita. Lissen. . . . You're goin' over to Benga, ain't you? Tavua's plantation on Benga Island?"

"Yes, Missi."

"You're drivin' the launch yourself—alone?"

"Yes, Missi."

"Do something for me."

"We do anyt'ing for Missi. Alla-time!"

"Carry something along for me!"

Kalita's gaze widened with a swift yellow flash. "Carry? To Beqa? Carry to Beqa for Missi. . . . No!" His broad breast heaved under his tunic. "No place for Missi at Tavua's place. Bad house. Bad man. . . . Missi not going to Beqa—*no!*" he cried in a rush.

She tapped her foot. "Did I say so?"

"Missi *not* going?"

"No—no. Never!" Though in her vehemence one hand stole to her throat. "Not me, Kalita. Not *me*! I'm jest askin' you to give a lift along. Jest take something along with you."

"What?" he wanted to know.

She pointed simply. "*That!*"

And as Kalita spun around he became aware of her urgency, her coaxing plea, and the reason of it. For *that* was nothing more and nothing less than the ragged white-man beachcomber known as Jamison.

Yonder he sat, on the same couch where he had awakened the same morning. He appeared quite recovered, with a whiskey bottle in front of him. He appeared quite normal, with the flush of cheerful health. There is a certain steadfastness at a certain stage of drink which might deceive anyone. But it did not deceive Corporal Kalita—late of the Fiji Contingent—who gauged the tragic drunkard in a flaring eagle glance.

"Him? That white fella! What we do with him?"

"I'm askin' you. Jest get him over to your own island and keep 'im there. Jest 'ide him away in the jungle some place—under cover. Like a guest, like. Jest a private guest I'm sendin' over with you!"

"*Him?*" repeated Kalita, scornfully. "He all finish—all wash up! S'pose we do that, he die or go crazy——" He held up clinical fingers. "Three days!"

"No, he won't! No, he won't! Not if you keep care of him and see 'e don't. 'Struth, how can I make you understand? . . . Kalita. Listen. Didn't I hear Tavua jest now ordering a lot o' wines and such? And ain't you got charge of everything, over there to Benga?"

He nodded.

"Well then. Well then! Can't you keep 'im hid somewhere, *and give 'im his ration too*?"

The way she said it—so simply and earnestly—with the innocence of a dove! Kalita knew nothing about doves, but he was still a resistant male creature.

"What good that be?"

"Well, you'll be nursin' him a bit, won't you? You'll be keepin' him away from McDougal's. That's something!" She beat her little hands together. "My fright—can't you savee wot I'm askin' of you?"

Kalita "saveed." Oh, yes—within his own limitations he sensed how she was trying to use him. All his life he had been used to being used by the superior race, by one means or another.

"No can do," he replied, sullenly. "No can do nothing now."

"Yes, you can. Easy enough! Ain't you got your cart outside? Ain't you got a tarp'lin cover for it? Well—all you do is bring it around to the back door. I'll slip him out some'ow. . . . Easy!"

"Wha' for?" insisted Kalita.

. . . From overhead somewhere in the hotel came a rumbling shout, like impending thunder.

Josie's great eyes fixed on his.

"*There's* wot for! You 'ear? . . . *Tavua's* after him! You know wot that means—to make a swine and a mark of him. Knock 'im in the gutter, every time he catches 'im when 'e's shickered. Kick 'im in jail—devil th' life out of him! . . . 'Struth, it ain't much. But it's the only chance we can give him. To 'ide him some place where Tavua can't find him! Kalita . . .?"

She touched his sleeve. By accident or by design, she happened to touch the exact mark where his war-time chevron had been sewn.

"*Corporal* . . .?" she said. It was a long time since anyone had called him that.

He looked at her: looked between the woman and the man, both of the superior race. Sheathing his look at last as the eagle does. Veiling his bitterness and his jealousy. Then, once more submissive:

"Huh, Missi," he said. And vanished.

Josie came straight to the couch.

"Now, you. Boy! 'Ere's your bloomin' out for you—and you'll bloomin' well tyke it this time!"

But the boy made no move to take it. He stayed. He only took both her hands gently, and gently drew her to him.

He was very quiet, very calm.



" Josie's great eyes fixed on his.
" ' *There's* wot for ! You 'ear ? . . . *Tavua's* after him ! You know wot that means ! ' "

As a matter of fact, Jamison had reached that rather astonishing condition, which however is often verified in such experience as his, wherein everything regains its due proportion and adjustment. (Like one of those circus acts where the clown crawls high and higher on a flimsy tower of tables and chairs to stand suddenly at a precarious balance !)

" I'm not going, Josie. Thanks so much," he said. " I'm not going."

" Oh ! " she breathed.

" No : nor that either. I'm not worth it, Josie. Besides, I remember everything now. I remember. That beast McEwen and all he did. And you—you sweet and wonderful person—all you've been trying to do for me. The poorest possible reason ! " She never had seen him smile before. " There's only one thing. Only one thing lacking. . . . What did McEwen mean just now ? When he spoke of your coming from Sydney—something he'd found out. What did he mean about your being ' wanted ' ? Josie, you'll have to tell me."

And she knew she would, for under her searching, expert gaze this was the man himself. Just as she had glimpsed him the night before—grave and kindly, with the potential of tempered steel. Aye—Jamison himself, in however brief a revelation. Astonishing, of course, and precarious. But not altogether incredible to Josie's stout little soul with its romance and its wisdom.

" Why wouldn't I ? " she answered, with the toss of her head. " Why wouldn't I tell you ? "

(Surely never was a romance told in such utter clear simplicity.)

" If you want to know. There was a chap I was fond of in Sydney. A foreign-speakin' chap—d'y' see ? It's a fact I was fair ratty about 'im for a while. But 'e never took to me nohow. He liked another girl as was workin' at the same bar with me in Arundel Street. She was no good to 'im. She crossed 'im. So late one night 'e come in and shot her. I was the only witness. . . . Well ; wot d'y' think I'd do ? I packed me trunk and picked me feet up out o' that before the po-lice could nab me ! That's all. That's it."

" That's it," he echoed, cherishing her hands softly between his own. " That *is* it, of course ! . . . A man. A man made rather a mess of your life, didn't he ? "

" Yes," she admitted, though the brief scarlet flooded her face as she asked the question she could not help asking. " And wot made such a mess out o' yours ? "

" A woman," he admitted, though the twist that wried his mouth was one of agony. " A foreign-speaking woman, too. . . . Odd, isn't it ? "

They sat side by side, the two of them there, under the clerestory illusion of McDougal's hall in Fiji, at the end of the world. They sat hand in hand, and each could feel the other's heart-beat. Neither of them was more than twenty-three years old. . . .

" Josie," he said. " ' Why stand we in jeopardy every hour ? ' "

" I dunno." She meant no irreverence. (Dear Josie !) She had raised those big innocent eyes of hers. Without in the least betraying it, she was listening—listening. With an agony far beyond anything he could ever have guessed : as far as any woman's perception is beyond any man's. " I dunno. I dunno," she chatted. " But I s'pose you got some grand idea about it yourself, ain't you ? "

" Oh, yes," he stated. " I'm staying here. I'm not going away at all. I'm staying."

" Yes ? "

" Oh, yes. Until I meet Mr. McEwen again, you see."

From overhead came the rumble. . . .

Josie nodded brightly. " I see. A very smart idea, too—jest the sort you would 'ave ! " She turned to him and beamed, putting on all her charm at once like a brilliant hostess. For his part, he never had seen her smile before, either : so gaily and recklessly.

" O' *course* you'll stay. Why wouldn't you ? . . . And while y're waitin'. Jest to pass the time——"

Disengaging herself from him with her bird-like quickness, wee and sleek, deftly she seized glass and bottle from the table and poured.

" 'Ere's a lot o' luck for y' ! "

It made a huge drink as she fixed it—a brutal drink—a whole goblet full. Even Jamison drew back as she held it out. But the wide eyes were upon him and the bell-like note commanded :

" Take it stryte—d'y' hear ? "

He heard : and he obeyed. . . .

She darted to the hall. " Kalita ! *Kalita !* " The Corporal was there, just descending the stairs under his burdens. " Drop them bags—you can get 'em after. Come 'ere, quick ! Now's our chance, like I told you . . . ! "

But she kept him in the shadow for a moment—a long moment while she shot a glance sidewise into the billiard-room, waiting. Waiting—waiting, until she saw the slim shape of Jamison sinking slowly on the couch, slowly collapsing like a limp, ragged sack.

"Now then. Now then. *Now* we got 'im! Grab him, Kalita—help me grab 'im. And out. Quick—quick! . . . Heaven knows he ain't so 'eavy. It's easy enough. . . . Out to the back door, Kalita. I c'n hold 'im while you bring that cart around. Out—out—*out* with 'im! . . . *Imshi!*"

They "imshied." Between them they managed it like a piece of conjuring, for certainly no slave-driver ever drove harder than Josie, and certainly no slave—whether he cared or not—ever wrought with better will than Corporal Kalita. They managed. They got him out. Without a hitch and without detection. Almost without a sound except for the tinkling run of her tense, low-voiced orders. . . . Only one thing, when it was done. One curious thing happened. Curious and probably unprecedented, because nobody could ever have known it to happen before. When that brave little unconquered voice broke at last in something like a sob. . . .

III.

SO this was how Jamison made the next stage of his pilgrimage—slung into a hand-cart and covered with a strip of tarpaulin: trundled down through the streets of Suva town and dumped aboard a cargo launch that finally smuggled him off to Beqa Island: as a piece of freight, inanimate.

On Beqa he was landed, and on Beqa he was fated to achieve his destiny.

A lovely spot is Beqa in the Fijis—set like an emerald on the broad blue buckler of Suva Bay. You cannot buy a ticket to Beqa: the travel bureaus never heard of it. Very few persons ever have heard of it—except as they might be privileged to attend its ancient ceremony of the *Vila-vila-irevo*, "The Day of Flames"—when to be sure it sustains a certain fame.

For the rest, it is a clump of wild and almost impenetrable jungle, edged with clearings for some sleepy native villages and some obscure white-man plantations which may or may not be sleepy, according with the uses of their owners. But anyway, if you can say that all Fiji is still a marvellous tropical refuge, why then you must say that Beqa harbours not even a lone policeman—a fact still more marvellous!

So Jamison found a perfect hide-out. Through days unnoted and unnoticed he existed on Beqa Island. Kalita having hidden him away like a prize pet, in a secret leafy covert of a high ravine, there he continued to exist—quite safely.

As a reflection: it might seem singular why, among all the writings about all the vagaries of far-wandering men—why none has ever done justice to this particular vagary of Jamison's. Perhaps few writers were ever vagrants themselves. Perhaps the question is stark and horrid. . . . Yet there clings such pity about it—such a pitiable tragedy of life and death and damnation. . . .

However:

Jamison was making no reflections of any kind. Lying on his bed of palm spathe, he watched the eternal dawns rise in golden glory, he watched the eternal purple nights spread over in star-sprinkled silence. He lived like some exotic plant—hand-fed at noon and in the moon nightly dew-fed. He lived like a mote in suspended space and time, without questioning either. Until one morning he wakened again to the misery and the actuality of events—his wretched consciousness creeping back into his wretched body yet once again. Another awful morning. . . .

The occasion being, of course, that he had been deprived and bereft of his necessary stimulant for more hours than he could count.

"Kalita!" he complained.

But there came no answer, no customary ration. Even when he dug out the last bottle, concealed under the vine-bound walls of his lair, even that was empty. In desperation, after a while he started a bewildered search.

It proved painful. It led him through a sort of rabbit-run down the side of a thicketed hill, where he tumbled and stumbled in a dense maze of lianas. It landed him at last on a prickly slide that tilted him out through the jungle edge—mostly on his knees and his nose—up against a rough stone wall, where he was able to brace himself and to peer painfully forth.

And this was what he saw:

Before him lay a grassy amphitheatre, broad and deep—the clear foreshore of the island, sloping sweetly to kiss the water. On his right some distance down stood a small plantation house, prettily embowered

in tropic growths. Behind and beyond, and beyond that again, stretched the whole breadth of sunlit Suva Bay, far across to Suva town.

He knew it must be Suva, and not Rio, or Hong Kong, nor any more fanciful mirage of Tartarus or Gehenna, because he recognised the crooked peak of Thakombau's Thumb—the grand landmark of Fiji.

Thus far he could feel reassured. What confused him was a clouded buzz of activity that seemed to be going on all about. The sloping sward seemed infested with distant groups and dots of people. Around the landing-place and further, the Bay itself seemed thronged with yachts, launches and shore-boats—coming and going like so many beetles.

Possibly these effects might be the sort that crawl on a wall. But when he tried to brush them away they still remained. And what confounded him still more, with more immediate amazement, was a great burning and crackling from quite close beside him—from just behind the grey stone curb to his left. A vast, mysterious up-leaping of smoke and heat—as if he had blundered against the monstrous verge of the Pit!

It was too much for Jamison. He stared dizzily until a fuming gust blinded him. Then he cowered in sheer helplessness. "Kalita," he called. "Where are you—Kalita . . . ?"

And lo?—Kalita was there. He stepped out from the thicket like a faun from the classic myrtle-grove. But a definitely different Kalita. He no longer wore his frayed uniform of blanket cloth. On his trim, bronze body he wore only the kilted *sulu*, the proper dress of his race. He was no longer Corporal Kalita, the trained non-com. He was now Tui-qalita, the titular chief of his own island!

Straight and scornful he stood, looking down upon the white man who crouched at his feet—*one* white man with whom he need not be impassive or submissive!

"Huh. . . . What you want?"

"Why, hello; fancy finding you!" observed Jamison. As always, he was gentle and courteous—only swimming with weakness and bedazement. "But see here, my dear fellow. Ah—I mean to say. Really, you know! Haven't you rather forgotten me lately?"

"Yes," assented Kalita, with emphasis. "We forget you, for true. We finish with you—all wash up! Mebbe you want to know wha' for? . . . You see *here*!" The tone of retort is so rare among natives, it pierced even the perception of Jamison. "You see that house?" demanded Kalita. He indicated the pretty plantation below.

Jamison could see it, partly.

"You know who own that house?"

Jamison could not, naturally.

"Tavua! Tavua McEwen own that house. Some time he live there. This time he live there five–six days. . . . You savee?"

"Yes," said Jamison.

"Alla-right. Now you savee who stay in that house—who keep that house for Tavua this time?"

"No," said Jamison.

"*Missi Josie!*"

Something checked the heart in Jamison's breast as a blunt finger checks a clockwork.

"Miss . . . ?"

"Huh. Tavua bring her over."

"Josie . . . ?"

"Huh. Tavua take her that place: bad place—bad man! . . . And you savee how long she stay?" Kalita thrust an outspread palm. "Five–six days! . . . And you savee wha' for she stay?" Every word was tipped with his grief, his in-bitten rage and contempt. "*For you!* Mebbe you no savee that—eh?"

But he did. The poor castaway. All at once, with all his memories: the follies and the horrors he had tried to escape—dear God!—he "saveed"!

Meanwhile Kalita had no mercy on him. Why should he have had? For once in his life he could tell one white man more or less what he felt, and more or less the deadly truth. "Jes' for you. . . . Tavua, he too dam' wise—he find out everything. He find out about Missi. He find out about you. Missi no fright' for herself: but s'pose she no come, Tavua catch you plenty quick—he chuck you in jail—he beat plenty hell out of you! Yes: she fright' for you. 'Kalita,' she say, 'give that boy one chance! . . . Must give boy his chance!' she say. . . . And fine chance you be make of it!" he added in a savage climax.

The world—all the remnants of a world—reeled around Jamison. All except the smiling-bowered plantation house, nestling below.

"Down there? Josie! . . . Josie's down there?" he stammered. "What—what's she doing down there?"

"What she do?" Kalita reached the even rarer height of a bitter irony. "*Missi?* Oh—she scrub the floor, mebbe. She clean

the dish. She make the bed. Huh! . . . Tavua, you savee—Tavua he no fool for *no* woman very long. He catch'm plenty. Already he catch'm new one to-day—some new lady jes' land in Suva to-day!"

"*Kalita!* And you did nothing? You might have done something—might have stopped Josie!"

Kalita only shrugged. "Missi come with Tavua. She no give order—no speak nothing. . . . No could do nothing."

It was the way of a native—the sudden, sullen limitation of a native when dealing with the superior race. And somehow, in quite another racial way, it stung Jamison simply out of himself.

"*If you were a man, you would have!*" he cried—the cry of his anguish and his despair.

He started up, nearly toppled, and grabbed hold on the stone wall. Whereby he was enabled to see over that wall and to blink wonderingly within.

Now, the thing he blinked upon was this: A crater—a rudely circular enclosure, to the rim of which he clung. The rim itself was massively built, like a squat tower dug in against the slope of the hill. The space inside would be some fifty feet across, perhaps. And the whole bowl contained one vast and seething fire. . . . A carefully tended fire, too; deep-laid in hardwood billets and bedded down with a grid of basalt cobbles. A fire of good age, moreover, for from those red stones the yellow flames sent up a scorching, smoking breath.

Certainly, if not the Everlasting Pit, you could call this a very fair eruption: and certainly Jamison might well have wondered. . . . .

But hereabouts Kalita did a little erupting on his own account. Tui-qalita, snorting in fury, hopping to the curb in front of him—

"You say we no be man? You t'ink we no be man? . . . You watch! You jes' watch here!"

With a conjuror's gesture, he whipped from his waist a handsome silk-and-cotton kerchief. With deft precision he rolled it to a ball and tossed it far into the crater. . . . Where it landed, there it whiffed up. Where it glowed, there it vanished as a single spark.

"Huh! You see that?" he exulted. "Alla-right. . . . Now s'pose we do alla-same. Eh? S'pose we jump in fire, alla-same place? Yes, for true. . . . *S'pose we walk about that god-dam' fire and no give a dam' mebbe we burn up!* What you t'ink then?"

Well, what Jamison thought then was merely the dawning of a faint and fantastic humour—like a saving coolness. He knew now: he understood. In some degree, he did understand the crater and the fumes—the launches and the spectators—inevitable business of any such unreal fol-de-rol. He could understand at least that he had fallen in actually, between Capricorn and Cancer, with the stage-set for that sheerest of all tropical fantasies: "The Day of Flames"—the fire-walking of Fiji!

Kalita confirmed it. "Huh! 'Fire-walk.' *A vila-vila-irevo. Rikata no lovo!* We walk in that oven. All Beqa people walk."

"Ah?" queried Jamison. "You do? . . . And how can you do that?"

Kalita explained it. "From old-time god—he teach us. Long-time ago he teach us."

"Ah?" queried Jamison. "He did? . . . And whatever for?"

Kalita beat his broad breast proudly, in his own pride. "Wha' for? Because we be men. S'pose we no be men—we die plenty quick! . . . Because that fire make us strong again. That fire take away all speck and stain from sin—then we get wash' all clean again—alla-same like cotton-wool!"

Doubtless he was somewhat mixed in his theology, somewhere between the phrases of a mission school and the ancient wisdom of a Fijian chief. Doubtless. But there was no mistaking his conviction—nor his challenge.

"You not believe that, eh? You laugh, mebbe! . . . You t'ink is only lie!"

"Why, no," answered Jamison. "Why, no," he said, slowly. "I think it's quite likely!"

For all this while Jamison had been staring into the crater—staring into the ardent heart of the fire. Fascinated. Staring at the bed of quivering heat where the kerchief had disappeared, reduced to its pure elements of ash and vapour at a single puff. There was nothing unreal about the fire!

In that moment he was conscious of himself and everything about him with a vividness vouchsafed only to those under ultimate sentence. Aye—for one more dispensation conscious of his ragged figure, his haggard, woeful face and his trembling limbs. Of the raging thirst in his throat, unendurable and never to be assuaged. Conscious, most terribly conscious of failure and shame and cowardice—the utter loss of all honour and all hope—all he had ever been or might have

been, and again, of all that had ever been done for him—such as Josie had done: the brave sweet soul who had tried to give him his chance. ("His chance"—good God!—his pitiful chance!) Conscious, so that his very bones abhorred him, of all these things. . . . But conscious finally of the natural and beautifully appropriate end to a coward's pilgrimage now offered him at this far end of the world in the strangeness of these places. . . .

After all, such moments sometimes occur to the fugitive and the derelict, in his tragic drama, seeking his last stupendous flourish—if he is lucky!

Jamison did not laugh. What laughter could have been adequate? But he achieved one of his wried smiles. "I think it's quite likely," he repeated. "Thanks so much. . . . I'll be right with you!" And he started to scramble up over the wall.

Kalita blocked him—scowling. "Eh—what? Keep off. What's a-matter—you crazy? . . . Go away! What you s'pose you do?"

"Why, I'm coming with you—that's all. Just lend me a hand up, won't you kindly?"

"In fire!" snarled Kalita. "You t'ink you come in fire? . . . You no can do that!"

"Can't I? You watch. I don't give a damn—whether you mean it or not—I don't give a god-damn about that fire, either! . . . Are you lending me a hand?"

But Kalita still held him off: Tui-qalita, more than ever like a bronze eagle, flaring down at him with eyes as yellow as the flames. "White fella: this no be fake, you savee. This be for true. This fire alla-same like *hell*! . . . No white fella ever do. You no *dare*!"

"Don't I?" An errant eddy of the wind gathered all the fume of the Pit and cast it suddenly around them in a roaring, shrivelling blast. "Don't I dare?" cried Jamison. "Hell! *Hell?* Why, that's where I belong. *That's what I'm looking for!* . . . Let me in. Let me up, Kalita!" he shouted, reeling and struggling through the murk like a disbarred fiend. "*Kalita!* Do you hear me? . . . *Corporal!* Give a hand here!"

With a savage chuckle, for the first time in his life Corporal Kalita extended a willing hand to a white man.

FIJI: an Archipelago in the Pacific between 15° and 20° S., meridian 180°. Comprises 250 islands of which 80 are inhabited. Population approximately 120,000, of whom about 2,000 are whites. Chief products: sugar, copra: etc., etc.

This is all quite true, to be found in any proper textbook, with the aid of any proper map. And if the map is big enough, you might even find the isle of Beqa—as a pin-point.

Now the difference between a pin-point and a continent is merely how much you are able to observe at any given moment. And the difference between one point and another point on this old earth is often how much refreshment you are able to get. A picnic, for instance—a picnic to Beqa would seem more or less the same as a picnic anywhere else: blue sky: twinkling water: a grassy slope spreading its invitation up to the trees—like a green saucer with a tuft of parsley. And the picnickers would seem much the same: a few officials, a few favoured visitors and globe-trotters, with a garnish of the usual stodgy local society. Nothing wonderful. Nothing miraculous. . . . This is the inevitable commonplaceness of places, which is only occasionally balanced by the incorrigible romantic strangeness of them.

However:

If it should occur and you *are* invited to Beqa in the Fijis for the rare occasion of a native *a vila-vila-irevo*, you will be told that you must not approach too closely on the saucer until the natives are ready. You will have to stroll and wait for the picnic to begin. . . . Rather a bore, perhaps. But then, as anybody will tell you, there is no accounting for natives: and even to be present at all at *a vila-vila-irevo* by invitation of Government House is considered something to write home about.

T. V. McEwen was explaining these matters, in his own special fashion, to his own special guest, under his own bowered pergola.

"Not as *I* need any invite," he was rumbling, jovially. "O' course *I* stay here when I like—though I've plenty other properties. You ought to see my plantation house on Ovalau! But what I mean—me and my guests can always be quite private. Hey? Yes. . . . We'll be better keeping comfortable here in the shade, don't you think—*Contessa*? And let the rest of 'em stew around out there!"

In a fisted wave of his riding-crop he showed the other picnickers from Suva town who were dotted about the sunshot lawn: a few trim uniforms, a few limp linens, a few starched frocks and parasols. Tavua made

fun of them all. Himself, he wore his favourite make-up of unbuttoned collar and straddling boots—very much himself, and very pleased to register so humorously and so shrewdly on the charming creature now standing by his side.

He had been manœuvring all day to cut her out from the picnic gang and to get her apart like this.

She suited him. A queenly woman, who must have played with many hearts in her time—a languorous blonde woman, exquisitely dressed, with deep and expectant eyes that must have turned the heads of many men. She was rather a mystery: but a rich mystery, too. She had arrived in Suva Harbour this very morning on board of a private yacht—a sea-going yacht, no less!—which even now lay anchored just off Tavua's landing, all awink in polished brass and sparkling white.

He had learned to call her "*Contessa*"—"*Lady Cleo*"—some kind of foreign, high-toned title: Russian, it might be, or Eye-talian (he was quite indifferent). A certain experience had taught Tavua pretty well when and whether he was wasting his time. Tavua—as one observer had remarked about him—"Tavua no fooled with no woman very long."

She suited him: and he already knew quite instinctively that his hearty, masterful method had not been altogether in vain. . . . If only she would not appear so abstracted all the while. Even now she held the air of abstraction which had piqued him all along. Even now she gazed out over the picnic assemblage—as if always looking for somebody else.

"Yes?" she observed. "Very nice . . . I suppose all white men—travellers, any kind—they will come here to-day to see your fire-walk?"

"No!" he corrected. "Unless they got privilege. Wanderers and such. We don't allow 'em."

She seemed to lose interest, and to catch it again. T. V. showed her the little knoll up beyond on the grassy slope whence a new burst of spark-flecked clouds had just gone up—like the cap of a miniature volcano.

"There's where it happens."

"Oh? And it happens? Does it happen?"

"Oh, it happens right enough," he laughed, on his Simon Legree note. "Though I could never tell you how—and they're my own niggers doing it, too! Not that anybody cares. . . . Y' see, my dear *Contessa*, between smart people like you and me, in this part of the world anything can happen. And nobody cares, and nobody ever tells! What? Yes. Sweet: ain't it?" He let his admiration run over her full figure like a bold caress.

"But likely they'll be all of another hour before they begin . . . How would you like to rest inside for a while?" he purred.

She seemed still a bit haughty; whereupon he promptly switched his method. "No? Well, there's no hurry. We'll have something cheering, anyhow . . . Josie!" He turned toward the verandah and clapped his hands, imperiously. "*Josie!*" he roared. "Serve the tray out here!"

And that was the precise moment when it did happen. . . .

Lady Cleo had been gazing absently under her daintily-beringed fingers, out through the glaring sunlight. "Oh, but I say—Mister Tavua!" she exclaimed, suddenly. "Aren't you mistaken? I think they *are* beginning. Look: there is someone coming from your fire-place now!"

It was so. Up on the knoll yonder, from the exact centre of its smoking vent, a single figure had just bobbed out like an actual demon from an actual hell. Pausing on the wall, it sprang forth and began to descend the slope. A figure tall and lithe, but somehow not like any notion of a Fijian fire-walker.

"Why—look! . . . It is no native!"

And that was so.

"Why, look! . . . *It is a white man!*"

And that was so, too.

They stared. Tavua, and Tavua's titled guest—and Tavua's housekeeper. Yes, Josie—late of McDougal's Hotel in Suva town—Josie herself, who issued from the verandah just about the same instant. They all stared—separately stricken by a separate emotion—all three stared at the white man who advanced at a rambling, casual pace, paying no attention to the further crowd on the lawn, striding straight toward them.

An incredible apparition of a white man—a tall young man—but a battered tramp of the far spaces if ever there was one! More incredible as he came nearer. . . . Wanderers and such? Good Heavens!

He wore the rags of a sailor's garb, blackened with flame and soot. His shoes were singed to cinders. Even as he came he slapped off a live spark clinging here and there about him, like dust of a journey. His smutted face and unshorn beard made the perfect mask of a minstrel caricature

—mask enough to hide any real expression. Yet when he sauntered down before them he was able to greet them each in turn—even with a nice distinction—this horrid wreck.

"Miss Josie," he said.

"How do you do, Cleo . . . ?" he said.

"Hello, McEwen," he said.

"*What?* Well, my colonial oath, if it ain't the duke. The beachcombin' gent himself! Well, well! Name of Jamison, I believe? I heard you were hiding around these parts somewhere, though sure I never expected to find you alive. . . . Well, well, *well*!"

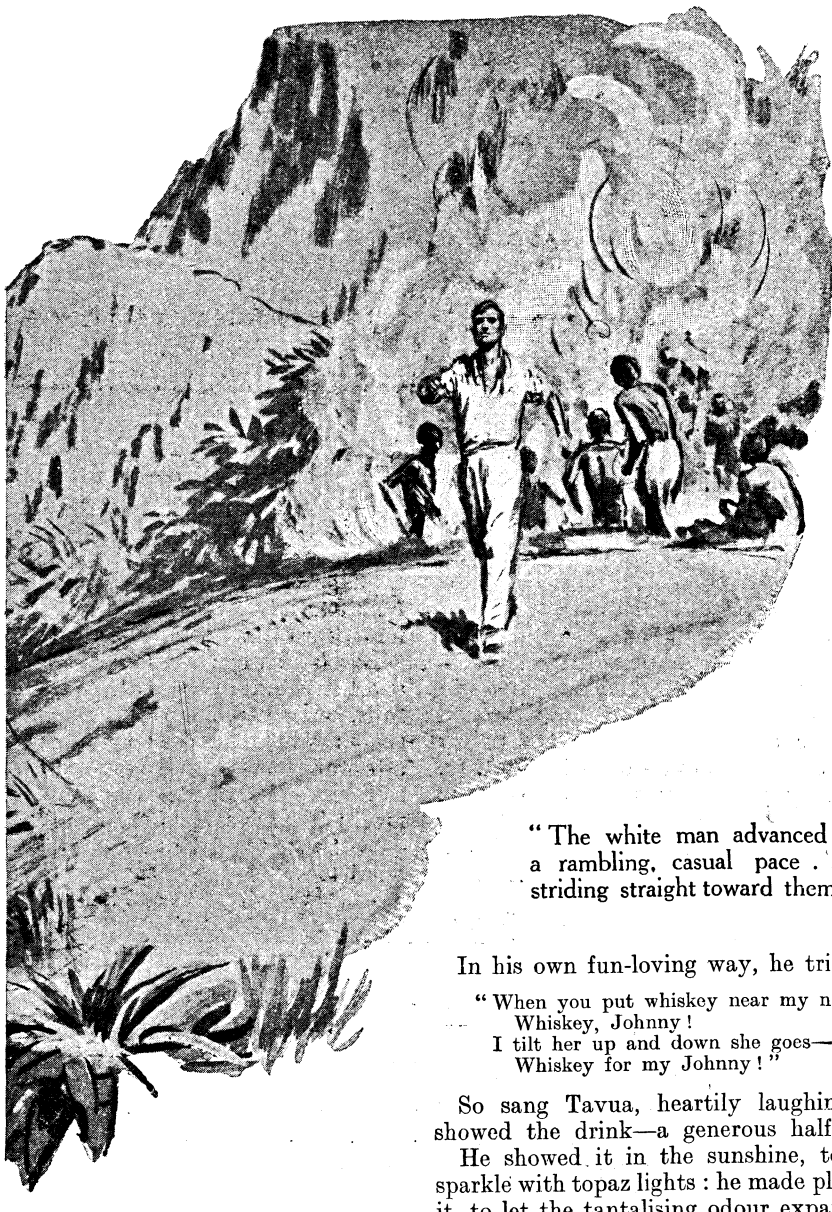


"'Why—look! . . . It is no native! . . . *It is a white man!*'"

Probably each of them made some kind of sound. But it was Tavua who recovered first. To do him justice, Tavua galvanised fairly well at the tap of a cosmic amazement.

The apparition said nothing. And to do him justice again, Tavua could think fairly fast at the clap of a cosmic warning.

"Glad to see y', duke!" he roared.



"The white man advanced at a rambling, casual pace . . . striding straight toward them."

"Have a drink!" he offered. Quickly he picked a glass from Josie's tray.

"But o' course you'll sing for it," he added, grinning (the big, genial and evil man). "O' course you will! A free drink, d'y' see? You'll sing for it—like you always did!"

The apparition said nothing.

"Why, sure!" urged T. V. "Don't be bashful. You're quite the entertainer. You remember the song you used to pipe for drinks around. How does it go? . . ."

In his own fun-loving way, he trilled it,

"When you put whiskey near my nose—
Whiskey, Johnny!
I tilt her up and down she goes—
Whiskey for my Johnny!"

So sang Tavua, heartily laughing, and showed the drink—a generous half-goblet.

He showed it in the sunshine, to let it sparkle with topaz lights: he made play with it, to let the tantalising odour expand.

"Here you are, m' lad. What d'y' say?"

Who could have told? The derelict, the bar-room cadger, the sinner and wanderer with no remaining grace—there he stood before the man and the two women with whose lives his own life had been so strangely entangled in the far spaces—self-damned. Who could have told what he might adequately say or do out of the depths of his damnation? If he had been a Malay or a Chinese in the same state, doubtless he might have run amok—he might have made a

dreadful noise and scandal among the peaceful strollers. If he had been no more than he seemed, doubtless he would have done no more than any other such worthless specimen. . . . Actually, he reached.

Aye, he did reach out!

At the same time his eyes lifted in his smutted mask, swift as the unsheathing of twin blue blades. At the same time his grip fell upon Tavua's other hand—the hand that held the riding-crop: fell and closed on fist and whip, fast as a steel trap.

With something like a scream, Tavua dashed the contents of the glass—a bursting spray of raw liquor—straight into his face.

Then he smiled. Aye, then he did smile.

"Ah?" he said. "Thanks so much. Awf'ly kind of you, McEwen," he said. "Nothing more really needed. But if you don't mind, I think we might step aside for a moment—shall we? . . . I mean, if the ladies will excuse us!" he said.

And quietly, courteously, he led away Tavua McEwen—a great, gross bulk of a man now gone all of a sudden twitching and nerveless—led him carefully away around the corner somewhere among the pretty bowers, somewhere quite out of sight. . . .

As many philosophers have observed: between Capricorn and Cancer almost anything is possible. But there remains a difficulty in getting any definite record.

For instance:

What passed between the two women who were left together under the pergola at McEwen's plantation—nothing of this is known.

What passed between the two men who adjourned to a secluded spot of the shrubbery behind McEwen's house during the same interval—this was never really revealed.

Even when the ragged apparition came sauntering back alone, casually twirling a bit of broken riding-crop—when he returned and spoke briefly with the queenly, blonde visitor entitled the *Contessa*, the *Lady Cleo*: what he said to her and what she said to him could hardly be translated.

Certainly, he was kind and apologetic. Certainly, she was no longer languid and expectant but haughtily indignant—as a mistress of hearts would have a right to be. Certainly she dismissed him at the end, this grimy, battered, cindered object—in one regal gesture she certainly abolished him from her interests and her concerns henceforth, for ever.

But later when Jamison and Josie stood apart on the green sward of Beqa Island in the Fijis, under its blue skies, near its rippled shore: what happened between these two afterward was surely the essence of a shilling romance—The Beachcomber and the Barmaid: The Duke and the Damsel in Distress—fact, fancy and fantasy all alike, and all quite true.

OPPORTUNITY.

SHE came to me, I saw that she was fair,
Though all she held for me I could not know,
She passed and left me idly dreaming there—
I let her go.

She went, and the relentless years are fled,
Again she will not come this way, I know,
In vain I wait for her returning tread—
I let her go.

In vain my longing and in vain my thirst
For those delights she bore I needed so,
Forlorn I stand, forsaken—nay, accurst—
I let her go.

REGINALD C. EVA.



"Mrs. Stan, sitting alone in a corner, behind a neglected cup of coffee, shivered from head to foot."

THE PURSE

By DOROTHY E. NORMAN-SMITH

ILLUSTRATED BY E. WELCH RIDOUT

MRS. STANLEY MARSDEN picked her way among the puddles of the High Street. The weather was execrable; the remains of last night's blizzard underfoot, and overhead a steamy, muggy warmth that took the last ounce of energy out of everybody. Everybody, that is, except Mrs. Stanley Marsden, who appeared to thrive upon discomfort and in whom the glow of courage was never more apparent than when faced by almost insurmountable obstacles.

Mrs. Marsden—or, as she preferred to be called by her fellow-townspeople, Mrs. Stan—was fifty. Short, stout, with a comfortable B-shaped figure, she cared very little for her appearance, beyond being "decent" and not wearing anything "shoddy." Fashion was a closed book to her. Her small, pink face with its button nose was totally devoid of powder. Her hair was comfortably grey at the sides. Her feet, which were wide and flattish, were encased in formidable goloshes, and she walked swiftly, with a kind of bouncing waddle that was characteristic of her, and drew the attention of two women who passed in a long, grey car.

"Who *is* that little fat woman?" asked Lady Hilson, smiling faintly. "I'm always seeing her about."

"Of course you are," was the reply. "When you've been a little longer at Bilborough, you'll realise that Mrs. Stanley Marsden is a personality to reckon with. Her husband was Marsden, the grocer at

the corner of Queen Street, but he's retired now, fairly wallowing in money. He's on the Council, and, they do say, in the running for the mayoralty. If he gets it, it may be a big thing for him. They intend to ask Royalty to open the new Town Hall this year, and—well, you never know! Sir Stanley Marsden, eh? With a house in Mount Street and a shooting-box in Scotland, and possibly a baronetcy before he dies! Depend upon it, she's got it all mapped out!"

Her companion shrugged tolerant shoulders.

"Small-town politics! Doesn't it bore you to death?"

"No, I don't think it does. It's life, after all."

Serenely unconscious of these remarks, Mrs. Stan headed energetically for the largest store that Bilborough boasted: Messrs. John King & Sons, facing the Market Square. There was a sale on at King's, and Mrs. Stan was minded to purchase for five and eleven-three a birthday present for her youngest daughter which would otherwise cost her seven and six. To achieve this object she had walked the mile and a half into Bilborough. Having decided that the roads were too bad for the two pampered horses, and that Stan required the small two-seater Rover for business connected with the Council, she had "made no more bones about it," to use her own expression.

Everybody seemed to know her. She nodded brightly to several shopkeepers; said "Well, Tommy!" to one or two grinning youngsters; had a word with the Vicar, and another, quite impartially, with the Wesleyan minister. She even ran a few perilous yards after a tall woman in black, whom she addressed as "Mrs. Lawrence," and to whom she poured out a quantity of statistics and figures connected with the Coal and Blanket Club, of which she was the vigorous and efficient Secretary—as indeed she was of numberless clubs, societies and local efforts.

King's was already crowded when she arrived. The rooms were warm and moist with eager, seeking femininity, and the assistants rapidly becoming reduced to panic. For one moment Mrs. Stan actually considered abandoning the project, and buying for Olive a slightly cheaper article at its full price, from Osgood's in Market Street; but the lapse was only momentary.

Smiling brightly, but using determined elbows, she fought her way through the crowd to the Book Department, where, ten minutes later, she had purchased a highly decorated story of school-life, suitable for young ladies' reading and marked down to four and eleven. So far so good.

And then it was that the terrible moment came to Mrs. Stan.

She had paid the assistant for the book and was waiting for her change, when her fingers, tapping restlessly upon the counter, came into contact with a small volume of Keats, elegantly bound in white suède, and priced at ten and six. Mrs. Stan, glancing at it casually, experienced a sudden, strange desire; a longing so intense, so completely dominating, that the sweat broke out upon her round, pink face, with the effort required to push the little book across the counter; a desire to secrete the book beneath her large, plump hand, to draw it gently, unnoticeably, towards her and drop it into the capacious shopping-basket at her side!

Dumb with fright and misery, she received her change and fought her way to the comparatively secluded Art Department, where she wandered slowly round the pictured walls, staring with unseeing eyes at John King's conception of art as a saleable asset. Her stout, little knees knocked together; her eyes were hot and dry; her lips worked nervously between her teeth.

This was not the first time that dreadful desire had overtaken her. Twice, at least, she had fought it with fear and horror, but—and this was the most terrible part!—each time the desire had been more intense, the will to resist less potent.

Kleptomania! That was the fearful word that sprawled in letters of fire across the well-known features of "Taller than Daddy" at which she was staring. She had read of it, scoffing, in newspaper reports, had many times insisted that such a disease did not exist, but was merely a name for a common theft. A kleptomaniac; she, Agnes Marsden, wife of Bilborough's most respected citizen; a potential mayoress; president of the "Girls' Help Society," and mother of five children whose spiritual and worldly advancement she so ardently coveted.

She had been terribly ignorant, terribly wrong to doubt the existence of kleptomania as a disease. It *must* be a disease—a disease more terribly to be reckoned with than any of the bodily ills she had always acknowledged and vaguely feared. Yes, that must be it, she was a kleptomaniac! Disgust of herself was still rampant in her,

but already, having sought, found and pinned down the horror, her spirits were beginning to rise. If kleptomania were a disease, no doubt there was a cure for it, and the cure should be found. Nothing could be done until this question of the mayoralty was decided, for the cure might be long and arduous, and all her efforts must be concentrated on her husband, if he were to be elected for this momentous year of office. After that, Maud's wedding. Then she could seriously set about her cure; and in the meantime she must do her best to smother that dreadful desire. Perhaps the servants might do the shopping. Or Maud.

She glanced at her watch; saw with surprise that it still wanted two hours to luncheon. It seemed as though she had been gazing at "Taller than Daddy" for centuries.

Meeting the curious glance of the assistant, she beckoned him, bought the abomination (she honestly admired it!) and had it sent to a relative, who received it with mild surprise on the following day.

Then, taking her courage in both hands, she descended to the Kitchen Department and prepared to do battle with herself. Twenty minutes later, flushed with victory, she passed to the Linen Goods and from thence to the Ribbons and the Household Furnishings.

"I made too much of it," she told herself triumphantly. "Everybody feels that way at times. There's nothing the matter with me that a bit of will-power won't put right."

In this mood, with the first, strenuous grip of herself already lessening, she careered joyfully into the basement.

II.

THE lunch-room was almost empty. People preferred to get home on a day like this. In spite of the unseasonable warmth, storm-clouds were gathering again and more snow was predicted. The slush in the Market Square was almost unprecedented.

Mrs. Stan, sitting alone in a corner, behind a neglected cup of coffee, shivered from head to foot.

In a corner of her shopping-basket she had just discovered a purse, new and cheap, which had not been among her purchases. She had no recollection of putting it there, but there it was, a shoddy, despicable object, gaudily coloured and weak of clasp.

"I've done it now!" she thought, clasping her hands rigidly and pushing with nervous lips at her tight veil. "I've been and done it! And why? I don't want the purse. A common purse like that, too! As if I should want a purse like that. I've got plenty of money. I could have bought a better purse than that if I'd wanted one. I didn't want a purse at all. There doesn't seem to be any *sense* in it. Just seems as if I'd got to do it. That's all."

With shaking fingers she drank a little coffee. Her thoughts raced on.

"I could go back now and say it was a mistake. I could say it dropped into my bag in the crush. I could pay for it. I could go to John King himself and make a joke of it. John would be all right. It isn't as if they didn't know me!"

She drank again; and across her mind there flashed a vision of herself, a year or so back, confronting a trembling servant-girl with some trumpery ornament. "This was in your box, Lizzie!" And Lizzie: "It must have got in by mistake, Mum!" She remembered the unavailing tears and the instant dismissal of Lizzie; her own righteous indignation at the obvious lie. Oh, absurd! The cases were not parallel. "No," said some inward voice with emphasis, "they are *not*. Your case is by far the worse! Lizzie, poor flotsam of a Home of Detention, had little to lose that was not already lost. But *you*! Suppose John King did *not* laugh? Suppose some whisper crept around that *you*, whose husband bids fair to become the representative head of honest Bilborough, you, yourself, are dishonest? What then? What about Stan, then? What about the children? Maud, who hopes to marry a respected Birmingham doctor in a few months; Raymond, sitting for his Final in June; Réne, so clever with her drawing; Olive and Bert, both prefects in their schools—what about them? Never mind yourself. You could clear your own conscience in five minutes by telling John King, but are you going to ease yourself if there's the slightest risk to your dear ones? *You know you are not!*"

And, indeed, she knew quite certainly that she could not. The risk was too great. Trembling, she sat at her little table, weak in every limb, but moment by moment her decision to protect her family from the breath of scandal grew stronger, more determined.

She was startled from her resentful day-dreaming by the sound of a voice; a smooth, carefully "genteel" voice that could belong to only one person, the very last one she

desired to see just then. Pulling herself together, she made an effort to twist her lips into a smile of welcome as Lola Fenning deposited her shopping-basket next to hers and sank into a vacant chair opposite.

Mrs. Fenning was the wife of the only real rival Stan possessed. The "danger," as the racing people say. Some six years her junior, she had been a thorn in Mrs. Stan's flesh almost since the day on which her mother had bestowed upon her the then unheard-of and slightly scandalous name of Lola; first as a tale-bearing, pilfering child, whose mother had not even cared to send her clean and decent to school with the wholesome children of neighbouring farmers and tradesfolk; then as a wild girl whose undeniable beauty combined with native treachery had seduced many a respectable young woman's lad from her side; finally—and perhaps this was the bitterest blow of all—her sudden marriage to the steady-going son of the local corn merchant, whose succession, three years later, to considerable wealth had provided Lola Fenning with an excellent spring-board for her dive into the sparkling waters of society.

For of course Bilborough had its society. And Lola Fenning was far too astute to attempt the upper reaches before thoroughly investigating the home waters. She acquired a "manner," which downright Mrs. Stan detested but was obliged to acknowledge. Her beauty grew more pronounced with the lovely clothes she bought, folk said, in Paris. And if the son of the corn merchant drank a little more than was good for him and was less inclined than of yore to be the prop and stay of the Wesleyan Chapel, folk forgave him easily; for the Fennings had always been greatly respected, and there is a habit in these matters.

Therefore, as she replied with automatic politeness to Lola's carefully sweetened remarks about their friends, the weather, Maud's engagement, and a hundred airy matters, Mrs. Stan stirred her cold coffee round and round and thought:

"Forty years ago I was ten and you were four. I had to fetch you to school. You were a dirty little wretch then. You stole my pencil-case and sold it to the Brownlow boy for tuppence. I can remember how you lied about it, even now. When you were fifteen you stole my first sweetheart. Later, you tried for Stan; but, thank Heaven, there are some things even you can't do. Now you want to steal my big chance from me. You, who have never given your husband a child, want to spoil my children's future. You're not even thinking of your husband. It's all self with you. Grab, grab, grab. . . . I'm as bad as you, now. I've stolen a purse from John King. I'm as bad as you, in a way. We can fight on common ground this time. Well, we *will* fight!" And with a suddenly steady hand she beckoned to a passing waitress.

Mrs. Stan drove home in a taxi. It was an extravagance, but hers was an extravagant mood. She had sinned—not because she had stolen a purse; that was kleptomania; it was a disease. But she had hidden the theft—therefore she had sinned. Curiously, the consciousness of sin exalted her. She felt reckless, abandoned; knew herself competent at last to out-general the subtleties of Lola Fenning. She was at grips with life and the effect was stimulating.

She jumped from the taxi quite briskly and invited the driver to go round to the kitchen for hot soup. "Maggie will pay you," she added.

She was unfeignedly glad to be at home. The solid, well-fitting doors; the thickly carpeted staircase; the sombre oil-paintings; the distant laughter of children and the appetising odour of luncheon—all these things embraced her, wrapped her with a blissful sense of security.

Lunch was a jolly meal. A letter had come from Maud, who was staying with the parents of her fiancé, in Birmingham. She wrote happily. Réne and Olive discussed their bridesmaid frocks, bickering good-naturedly over the colour. Bert had been praised at school. In his boyish, boasting way he recounted the incident at length. His mother's eyes brooded fondly on him.

Her darling children! How clever they all were. How bright and amusing. How worthy of any honours their father and mother could get for them. Good-looking, too. They took after their father for that, she thought, without a trace of wistfulness.

Lunch ended, she retired to her bedroom for her daily "lie-down." She unpinned her scanty, greying hair, loosened her corsets, took off her smart walking-skirt and outdoor shoes, and presently knelt, a grotesque little figure in striped petticoat, from which protruded thick, short calves in stoutest woollen stockings, ending in slippers of red felt, by the side of her bed.

It was her custom to devote a few minutes of this hour to prayer. There seemed so little time in the mornings, and at night she was always tired. But to-day, somehow or

other, no words would come and presently she rose, sighing, and lay down on the bed, tucking the eiderdown round herself with a practised hand.

"It's no good being a hypocrite," she mused forlornly. "I'm up against Lola and I've chosen my weapons. If anybody's going to be in the next Birthday Honours, it's Stan, not Charlie Fenning. Perhaps God will forgive me, afterwards, when I've explained it all to Him. . . ."

Comforted, she fell asleep.

III.

SHE was awakened by an apologetic maid, bearing a cup of hot, strong tea, very sweet, as she liked it to be.

"Sorry to have to wake you up, Mam, but it's four o'clock, and Mr. King's been waiting the full half-hour."

The teacup rattled slightly in its saucer.

"Mr. King! Did you say Mr. King was here, Maggie?"

"Yes'm. In the drawing-room I put him, 'm. And Mrs. Fenning, she's there too."

Mrs. Stan put down the steaming teacup and turned away her face, grown suddenly grey and old.

"Mrs. Fenning!" she repeated stupidly. "Mr. King and Mrs. Fenning? Did they come . . . together, Maggie?"

"No'm. Mrs. Fenning's only just come. Shall I help you to dress, please 'm?"

"No. No thank you, Maggie. I'll be down in a minute. Tell Mr. King and Mrs. Fenning I'm just coming."

She began automatically to screw up her thin, grey hair. So it had come! Her plans were as nought. Lola Fenning had taken another trick. "And yet," she mused, bewildered, "I could have sworn she never saw the purse. And if she did see it, how was she to know it wasn't bought and paid for?" Of course! Lola must have seen her at the counter; must have witnessed the whole thing. Yet she herself had no recollection of it. It was strange and dreadful. She could not understand it. Such a poor sort of purse to make a fuss about! But one thing she could understand. John King and Lola Fenning were sitting in her drawing-room, waiting for an explanation. She could understand that all right. She could see them sitting there; John, with his kind, little grey eyes troubled, pulling fiercely at his long, grey moustache; Lola, serene, triumphant, already, in imagination, practising sweeping curtseys. . . .

Well, Lola should be robbed of one triumph, at least. Mrs. Stan hastily scrambled into her puce afternoon frock and rang for Maggie.

"Ask Mr. King to step into the dining-room, Maggie. Just Mr. King alone, you understand. And ask Mrs. Fenning if she would mind waiting a little longer. Give her some tea, Maggie, and some magazines to look at."

Subtly, she felt that this was a good move. "Coals of fire take the wind out of people's sails," she thought confusedly.

Searching in the still untouched shopping-basket, her fingers found and closed over the abominable purse. Her lips tightened, and something tightened about her heart too.

"It's the only way, now," she muttered. "I wish I'd done it straight away, only the devil seemed to get into me."

And indeed there was pathetically little of "the devil" left in the plain, fat little figure that presently faced John King across the splendour of the polished dining-table.

John King regarded her in some embarrassment. He had an extremely awkward half-hour in front of him, and with all his kind heart he wished it over.

"I'm right vexed to disturb you, Aggie," he floundered, "but I've summat rather awkward to say, and I sort of felt I'd rather get it over. . . . I'm right sorry for you, Aggie, but there it is! . . . that sort of thing can't be allowed to go on . . . I want you to help me. . . ."

"I know what you've come for, John," she replied, her voice flat but quite steady. "I haven't got any excuse to offer except that I didn't know anything about it. It sounds silly, I know, but there it is! You—you won't prosecute, John? Not for a little thing like that?"

"But it's not a little thing, Aggie. It's the principle I've got to think of. Not as if it was the first time, either."

"Not the first time, John?" she faltered. "Whatever do you mean?"

"Why, surely you haven't forgotten, Aggie? Twice before I've been lenient because you pleaded with me. I can see now it was foolishness. Laws were made to be kept and those that break 'em has to be punished. And no tears nor pretty faces nor pleadings are going to prevail this time. I've had enough."

Mrs. Stan was directly opposite the ornate, gilt overmantel. In the shining mirror she could see her face, round and puffy and still shiny with sleep. Her hair was a ridiculous

grey knob, precariously placed. Her neck was baggy above the puce collar. "No tears nor pretty faces."

She gave a sudden cackle of laughter; a harsh, hysterical note that made John King look up swiftly.

"It's funny, isn't it?" she gasped. "I'm sorry, John, but it *is* funny, isn't it?"

"Gladys Broome don't find it particularly funny," he growled, "nor May Addison. Nor me, neither, for that matter."

Gladys Broome. May Addison. A queer feeling of faintness assailed her and she sank suddenly into a chair, pulling at the tight collar with cold, wet fingers. The purse fell unheeded to the ground with a soft "plop."

"Gladys and May!" she faltered. "I —I thought—— Perhaps I haven't rightly understood you, after all, John. What is it you came to tell me?"

"Thought you weren't taking it in right," exclaimed John in a relieved voice. "Perhaps I'd better leave it for to-day, Aggie. You don't look up to much. Kind of yellow about the gills," he added in real concern.

She made a scornful gesture.

"Go on, John. I'm right enough. What's this about Gladys and May? They haven't been at it again? After all I've done for them and all their promises, John!"

He pursed his lips, thrusting out the thick, walrus moustache.

"Some folks' promises is pie-crust. You place too much reliance in the promises of such as Gladys and May. It's all very well to take an active interest in 'reformed' girls, Aggie, but you overdo it, you know. They came down to the shop to-day and nearly got away with five pounds' worth of stuff. Nearly! And I shall have to prosecute this time, Aggie. There's no help for it. 'Twouldn't be fair on others if I didn't. So I thought I'd tell you myself, knowing how upset you'd be. . . ."

She scarcely heard him as he rambled apologetically on.

Gladys Broome and May Addison were going to prison for stealing. They were poor and of little account. They had



"mugged" their job. So they were going to prison. She, too, was a thief; more adroit, perhaps, and of blameless reputation, but still a thief! But she was not going to prison. She knew, most certainly, that had she stolen hundreds of pounds' worth of goods from John King's shop, he would never have dreamed of such a thing.

The horrible, shameful injustice of it all overcame her. Blindly she fumbled on the thick carpet till her fingers found the purse.

"You see this purse," she said quietly, laying it on the polished table before him.



"To her consternation, Lola burst into torrential tears, crouching on the carpet."

He picked it up and a smile of real, almost childish, pleasure widened his face.

"Well, there!" he exclaimed. "So you were one of the lucky ones! Well, I'm right pleased, Aggie. I bet you were surprised to get it! It was quite my own idea, this, you know. 'Every tenth customer,' I said to Miss Price, 'is to receive one of these handsome purses. It'll be a great attraction,' I said. And, my word, it has been! The rush at that counter was so big that Miss Price says half the time she never said the little piece about my compliments, and so forth. Why, what's the matter, Aggie? . . ."

"I think perhaps you were right, John. I'm not quite the thing to-day. Shall we leave talking about—about May and Gladys—until to-morrow, John?"

It seemed an eternity before the front door banged to exclude John King and his kind, maddening sympathies. An eternity before she felt able tremblingly to cross the room and peer at herself in the ornate overmantel. Why she did this, she scarcely knew, save that, feeling unreal, she desired to see herself real. Well, she was real enough, there was no doubt about that! Her colour had come back. Her eyes were no longer scared and apprehensive, nor yet hard and defiant. They were her own eyes again; shrewd and bright and kind; steadily returning look for look; the eyes of a capable, mature woman of position; ambitious, reliable, honest. Honest!

Yes, she was that! The nightmare was miraculously lifted, blown away on the strong winds of reality and common sense. She had no fear of its return. Proudly she drew herself up to her insignificant height and opened the dining-room door. An appetising odour immediately enveloped her. Onion sauce! Yes, she remembered now that there was onion sauce for dinner. How good! Almost it struck her as being a reward. Life was going to be splendid once more. An ecstatic sense of rectitude possessed her. She was herself again. No longer a strange, furtive woman, plotting, hiding, defying. She was "Mrs. Stan."

The door of the drawing-room opened suddenly, violently, and Lola Fenning confronted her. She had forgotten Lola! The woman's eyes were hard and bright, but it was evident that she had been crying. Her smart little "cloche" was awry and wisps of auburn hair hung down and adhered to her cheeks. Her handsome, sullen mouth had obviously been recently made-up.

Rudely, almost violently, she pushed Mrs. Stan back into the dining-room, closing the door and leaning against it.

"Well, you've kept me waiting long enough!" she spat out. "I hope you and John King have said all there was to say about me! Here's your purse. I haven't anything to say. I may as well save my breath to blow my porridge."

She threw on to the table a large and well-filled purse, which Mrs. Stan with surprise recognised as her own.

"I don't understand, Lola!" she ejaculated, looking from the bulging purse to the angry, humiliated face of the woman and back again. "I haven't been talking to John about you at all. And how did you get this? I didn't know I'd lost it!"

"It was in my basket when I got home. You must have slipped it into the wrong basket after you paid the waitress for the coffee. That's all I can think of. I didn't do it, Aggie. I don't expect you'll believe me, though. You always did hate me."

IN a flash the years rolled back; back to where a dirty, defiantly sobbing little girl faced her accuser, a taut, plump, pig-tailed child whose every feature registered horror and stern justice. . . .

"You stole my pencil-case and sold it to the Brownlow boy for tuppence, you little beast!"

"I never! Take your dirty ol' pencil-case. You've got a face like a pie—trod on! . . ."

"NO, Lola. I don't know as I do believe you, I'm sorry to say." The fat, capable hands were folded upon her stomach. The roll of flesh above the tight, puce collar was tinged with pink. Mrs. Fenning made an exasperated gesture. She was near to tears again.

"Count your money. There's twenty-three shillings in silver and five coppers in that purse, Aggie Marsden. Oh, yes! I looked to see. D'you suppose that Charlie Fenning's wife has got to grab twenty-three shillings when she sees it! I tell you, you threw that purse into my basket instead of your own. They are just alike. If it had been anybody else's purse I should have sent it back with an apology, but I *knew* you'd never believe me."

Once again, accusing and defiant, their eyes bridged forty years.

"You can't blame me, Lola," Mrs. Stan said coldly. "However, the point is that you've brought the purse back. Twenty-three and fivepence is right. Hadn't you better go home and rest? You look done up."

To her consternation, Lola burst into torrential tears, crouching on the carpet by the closed door in theatrical abandon.

"Oh, my! This is a dreadful day!" she muttered, raising, with some difficulty, the prostrate Lola and deftly turning the door-key, lest Maggie surprise them in this crisis. "Come now, dry your eyes, Lola. One way and another I've had as much as I can stand to-day."

"Swear you'll never tell, Aggie! I've worked so hard to get where I am to-day. If this should get out I'm done for."

"I don't tell tales, Lola," replied Mrs. Stan with some asperity. "All the same, I hope for the sake of Bilborough and us all that Charlie won't be mayor. An honest mayoress is what every citizen has a right to demand."

"If you'll promise never, never to tell, I'll make Charlie refuse if he's elected," was the swift response.

There was a breathless pause.

Lola Fenning saw nothing save a fat, elderly woman in puce, in whose podgy hands lay precariously her social fate. But Mrs. Stan, in one swift, illuminating flash, saw many things. Election day. Stan in scarlet and chains. Cheering crowds. The new Town Hall being opened. Stan bowing low and shaking hands with the Royal Personage. Stan at Buckingham Palace, in a Mayfair mansion, in Scotland, at the Riviera, Cowes. . . . The prize was within her grasp. She had but to close her fingers and it was hers. . . .

What she actually did was to grasp Lola by the arm and propel her gently but firmly to the front door.

"What you suggest is blackmail, Lola. I haven't quite come to that, yet. *I'm an honest woman.* I've already given you my word and that's enough. Come election, we'll all fight fair and square and the best man will win. Good night."

"I can pray now!" she thought triumphantly, as she waddled vigorously up the lighted staircase.

The odour of onion sauce followed her like incense.

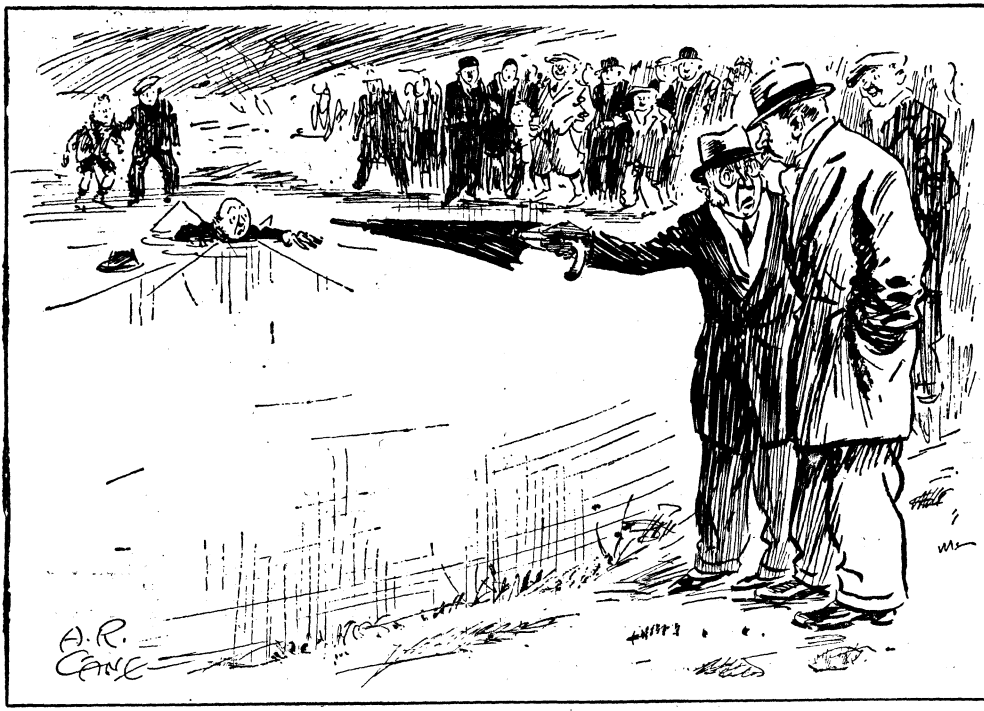
THE LITTLE BROWN PEOPLE.

WHEN the snow falls softly,
Heaping by the gate,
We know that they'll be coming
And they must not wait;
They'll huddle in the tall trees
And flutter shyly down,
All the little people
In their coats of brown.

Then we go out quickly
And take the kitchen broom,
To sweep a corner
So there'll be lots of room,
And we spread a table
Of crumbs they like the best,
And wait to welcome
Each little hungry guest.

They come so quickly,
The sparrow and the thrush,
For they've been watching
Upon the holly bush;
Then they feast together,
The blue-tits and the rest,
With the darling cheeky robin
In his scarlet vest.

DOROTHY DICKINSON.



BEYOND THE PALE.

HUMANE OLD GENTLEMAN (pointing to victim of thin ice): But I can't make out why they're making no effort to rescue him?

ONLOOKER: Can't you see he's the local rate collector?

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

SECOND CHILDHOOD

By Florence M. Goldsmith

WE have all heard of that indefinite period which is said to set in at any time between the ages of seventy and one hundred when one's voice begins to break for the second time and speech once more becomes a matter of "Goo's" and "Gaa's" and gurgles that might mean this or that or nothing at all.

But either we never leave our first childhood or we hurl ourselves wantonly into the second years before our time. Take our modern speech, for instance.

There was that large lady, well over three score years, in obedience to whose lusty "Fore" I hastily abandoned my contemplative position on the fairway. As she passed she threw me a vacant smile and a casual "Ta." I should have thought that she ought to have reached the "thank you" stage before now. But the world is full of people like that.

Two old gentlemen, quite respectable-looking too, ambling back from the nineteenth hole, yelled out a "Bye-bye" each as they climbed into their respective cars. A sweet young thing standing at the door of the clubhouse was punctuating a gorgeous young man's account of how he did the tenth, with a series of awe-struck "Coo's." I fled.

Going home in the bus I happened to listen as the conductor took the fares. No less than five middle-aged people said "Ta" in exchange for their tickets. A foreigner remarked "Tanks" and a literary-looking gentleman merely grunted without taking his nose out of his book.

When it came to my turn I said "Thanks so much." The effect was electrical. The conductor paused with my penny half-way to his bag, two people instantly gazed intently at



"This book was worth £150 p.a. to us"

"When we got married, Joan soon found she couldn't manage on the small housekeeping allowance I was able to afford on my salary as a clerk. There was only one way out—I had to get promotion and bigger pay. But how? That was the point. Then Joan saw one of Pitman's Correspondence College advertisements and urged me to send for their book, "Home Study—the Key to a Successful Career." After we'd read it, I decided to try one of their Courses. That book was worth £150 a year to us. Six months later the Chief called me in, said he was aware of a vast improvement in my capabilities and did I think that I could take over the Account Department of a new Branch. I felt confident that I could and told him so. I'm well on the way now to a further rise, and Joan hasn't to pinch and scrape any more. Was it worth the time I spent at night studying? You ask Joan!"

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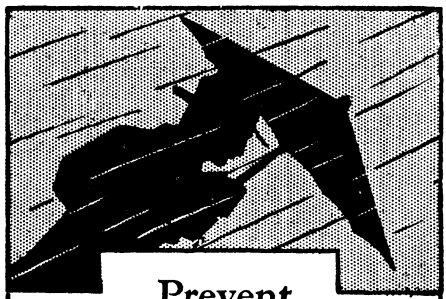
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me, while the literary one slowly raised his eyes above the level of his glasses and regarded me sadly. At the next stopping-place I made a hurried exit.

I reached home in a bitter mood. The King's English, I was convinced, was going to the dogs. I was, apparently, the only disciple left to carry on the glorious tradition. And my efforts were not even understood!

The telephone rang sharply. I rose, wearily, to answer it.

"Hullo!" blared a strident voice. Alas! I knew it well. Jones, with a terribly breezy manner and a phraseology horrifying to refined ears.

"I say, Phil's got engaged," continued Jones. "Gee, but she's some girl! I'm giving 'em a binge to-night. How about coming along and watching 'em make goo-goo eyes at each other?" He chuckled grossly.

"Oh, ta. Rather. I'll come like a shot. Coo, fancy old Phil engaged. . . . Yes. . . . Righto. . . . Ta-ta. What? The talkies afterwards? Yum. Bye-bye."

But, of course, I've been in my second childhood for years.



LUKEWARM.

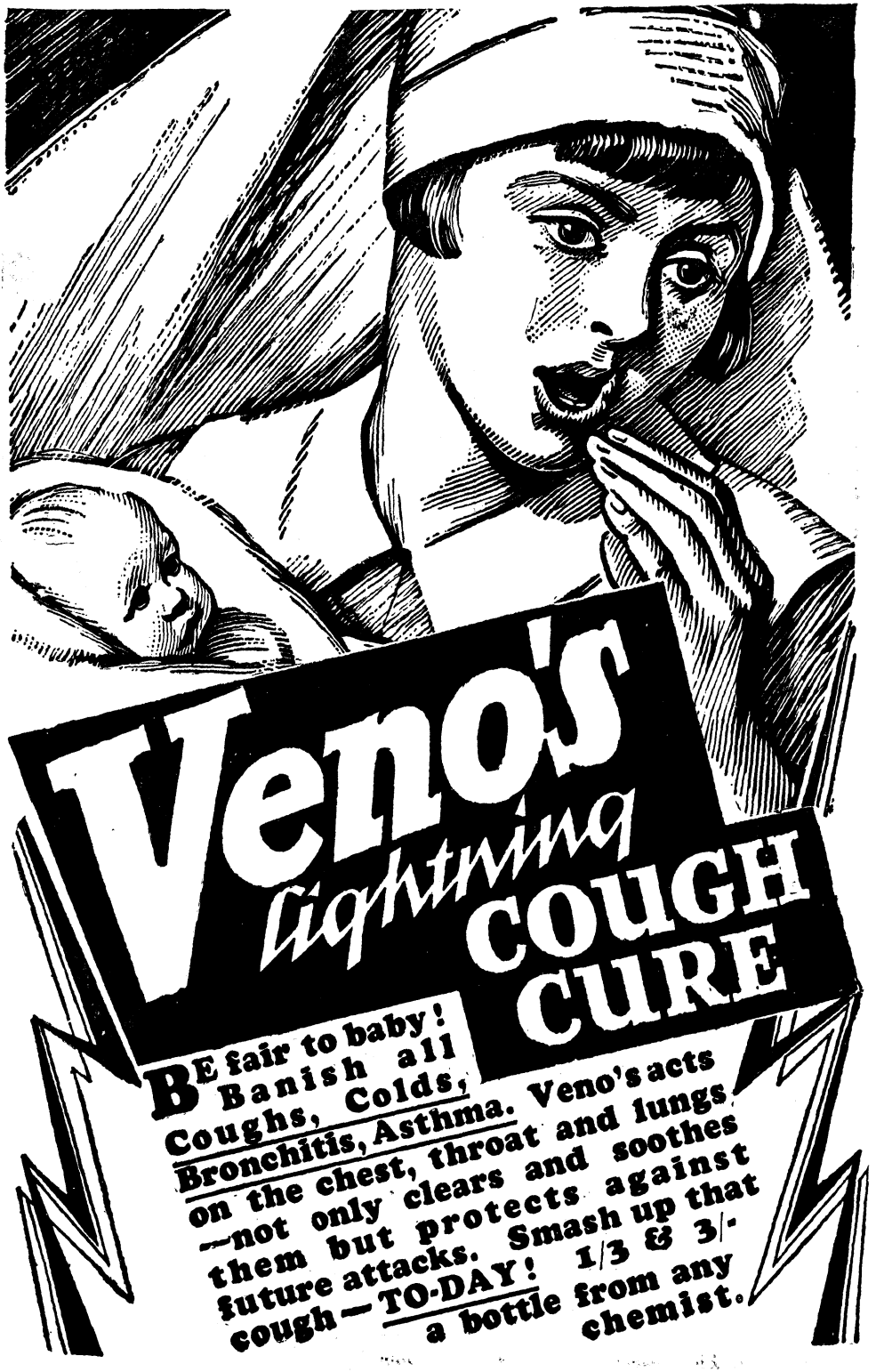
LADY: Nothing to eat for three days! Poor fellow! Would you like a cold chop?
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LADY: Good! You'll find the chopper round the corner.

LADY SHOPPER: I want a book for quite a small girl.

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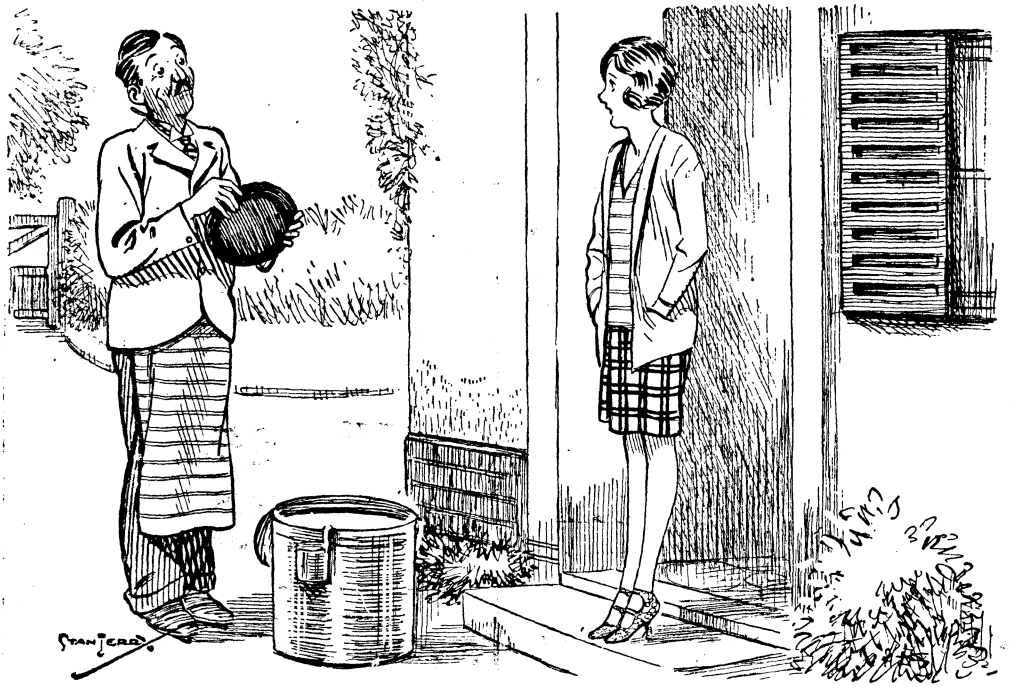
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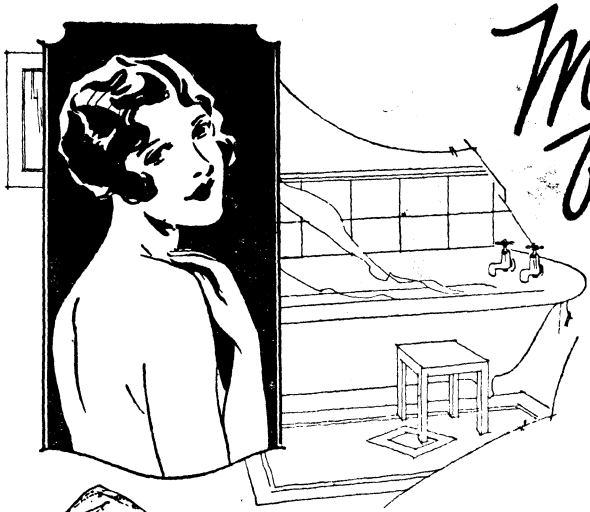
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The Windsor Magazine.

No. 423.

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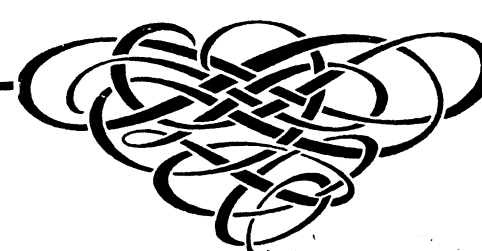
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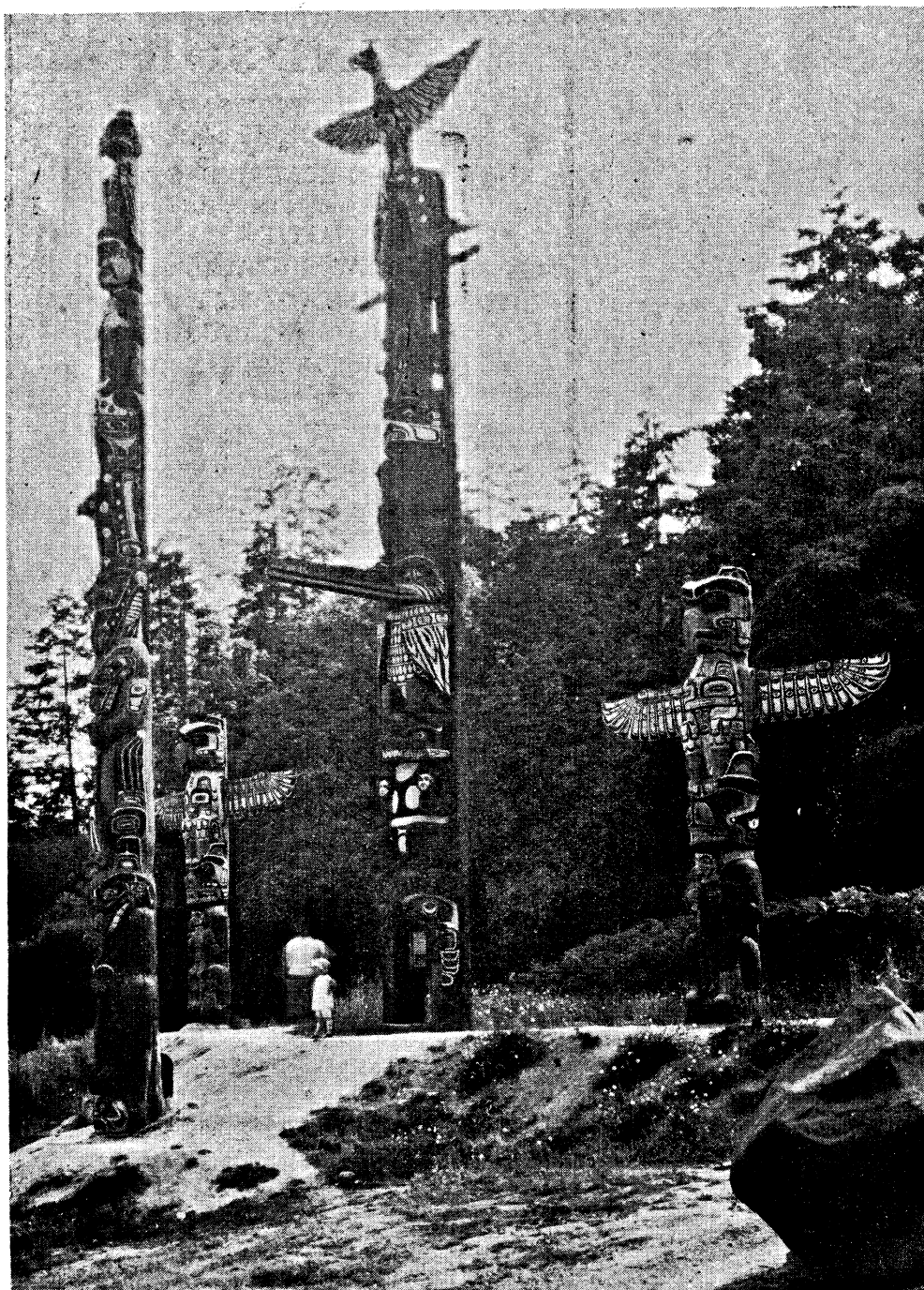
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OLD AND NEW SOCIALISM.

The descriptive accounts of "OUR GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS" which are attracting so much attention will be continued with

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TOTEM POLES, STANLEY PARK, VANCOUVER.

(See the interesting article, "Canada's 'Valley of the Kings,'" page 495.)



"That drive was like all the other drives they had taken save that, if possible, they behaved worse than ever."

THE JUSTICE OF THE RAJ

By GARNETT RADCLIFFE

ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT

WE are told upon the best authority that there are exceptions to every rule. Blackbirds have been known to be white, policemen are not always stalwart, and taxi-drivers are sometimes civil. But these things, although a strain upon our credulity, are orthodox in comparison with the principal character of this story. He was the driver of a tonga[1] in the Kohat cantonment and—this is the part you will hardly credit—he was kind to his pony. Almost as strange to relate, he took an immense pride in the turn-out of his tonga. The name of this phenomenon was Rustum Khan, and he was a Pathan from the Parachinar district.

Rustum Khan was fifty-nine, which is quite old for a native. Ever since he was twelve he had been driving the *Sahib-log* in tongas, and in the course of his life he had, despite all his care, worn out a great many tongas and not a few ponies. But that was due to time and weather, not to abuse or careless driving. For Rustum Khan was

[1] Tonga = species of small dogcart with hood.

very, very careful. He had his tongas and his harness overhauled at frequent intervals and he fed his ponies on the very best oats and *bhoosa* (dried grass), but of course he could not make them last for ever.

Good work is sure of a reward. In Rustum Khan's case the reward came from a wealthy old mem-sahib, wife of a general, who was sickened of seeing tonga ponies that had fly-covered sores upon their withers, harness of galling rope, and prominent ribs. As long as she was in the station she always employed Rustum Khan at double his usual fee, and when she left she made him a present of a beautiful little white country-bred, fit for an officer's charger, the best tonga money could buy (it had silver lamps and upholstered seats), and a set of harness of English leather with bells and gold-coloured buckles. Rustum Khan thought she had gone *pagel* (mad), but he was nevertheless extremely grateful and, so I am told, sends his benefactress a little present every Christmas.

His pride in his new outfit was overweening. Never had such a wonderful tonga been seen in Kohat. Even the new motor-car owned by Anderson Sahib, the head of the Kohat police, seemed shabby by comparison. Rustum Khan drove about the cantonments in a blaze of glory. Even when he hadn't a fare, which was seldom, he would drive down the mall for the pleasure of seeing the sun flash on the silver lamps and hearing the clip-clop of the hooves of the fast-trotting white pony.

Now if Rustum Khan had been a naturalist, which he wasn't, he would have known that it is only those creatures who are well able to protect themselves—such as dragon-flies and wasps—who may dare to flaunt brilliant colours. The gaudy tonga was liable to attract undesirable attention, and Rustum Khan, being old and fat from good living, was not able to repel it. He might have been wiser to follow the example of the humble moth and the timid grasshopper, and paint his tonga in less striking colours. Had he adopted some such camouflage the chances are that he would not have attracted the attention of Private Snooks and Private Buskins of the Loamshires, who had recently arrived in Kohat, in which case this story would never have been written.

Private Snooks and Private Buskins espied Rustum Khan's tonga when they were leaving the cantonment cinema somewhat the worse for beer. They were a couple of hulking louts not yet worthy of the name of soldier. The material was there all right, and in the course of time they would probably become ornaments of the great service to which they belonged, but at that time they were merely hobbledehoy civilians in khaki drill. They had been in India four months and classified all natives as "niggers." Severely sat upon in barracks, they sought to restore their self-esteem by beating unoffending *bhistis* [1] and *bungis* [2] and "chucking their weight about" in the bazaar. They found it a pleasant novelty to be able to lord it over a lot of what they called "niggers." The idea that the "niggers" might resent this treatment never entered their thick skulls.

Such were the gentlemen who remarked old Rustum Khan and his beautiful tonga outside the cinema. The sight caused Private Snooks to perform a little dance meant to express joy.

"Ow, my swell carriage!" he said. "Come on, Bill, and let's 'ave a drive rahnd the park. 'Ere, taxi—put your flag dahn."

Rustum Khan pretended he had not heard. His tonga was not for such as these. Had he had his way, he would never have driven anyone below the rank of captain.

"'Ere, you blinkin' nigger, *iderou* (come here) when you're told to." Private Buskins rather fancied himself as a linguist. "You no *mallum* (know) my *hookum* (order) I'll knock your silly 'ead hoff. *Iderou* and *chelo* (be quick) and the *jaldier* (quicker) you go the better for you. Come on, you *mallum* my *bāt* (talk) all right!"

"I wait here for officer sahib," Rustum Khan quavered.

"Garn!" said Private Snooks. "We're officer sahibs too. Come on, *hubshi* (nigger), wind 'er up."

There was nothing else for it. Shaking with impotent rage, Rustum Khan suffered the two youths with their hobnailed ammunition boots to climb into the tonga. Private Snooks sat in front beside Rustum Khan and Private Buskins sat behind, with his feet on the upholstered seat. They both sang loudly as they drove out of the cinema compound.

"Back to the fort?" Rustum Khan asked.

"Nah," said Private Snooks. "You *mallum* cantonment? Drive us rahnd a bit and let's have a *dekko* (look) at the sights. An' put a bit of *jaldi* into it, *hubshi*."

But Rustum Khan refused to beat his

[1] Water-carriers. [2] Sweepers.

tired pony out of its normal trot. Private Snooks snatched the reins and applied his swagger cane. The pony, unused to such treatment, broke into a gallop. Down the empty moonlit mall they tore, the tonga swaying, Rustum Khan cursing, and the delighted privates singing at the top of their voices.

For an hour they drove in this wise all round Kohat, avoiding the roads frequented by the night patrol of the military police. Just before "lights out" was due to sound they returned to the fort where the Loamshires were stationed. Here Rustum Khan, who was almost speechless with indignation, demanded seven rupees as his just fee.

"Garn, you and your seven rupees!" said Private Buskins. "Go and eat coke, you *hubshi*. If I give you three cheers you'll be lucky."

"Seven rupees is correct fare." Rustum Khan followed them with outstretched hand. "You no pay I tell Colonel Sahib. Seven rupees is correct fare."

Private Snooks swung round with clenched fists.

"Garn, I tell you, you blessed *hubshi*! Any more of your lip and you'll get a thick ear. 'Op it, Jack Johnson. . . ." A cut of his swagger cane emphasised his meaning. Rustum Khan, who was no fighting man, retreated in tears. Private Snooks and Private Buskins, convinced that they were the finest fellows in India, swaggered off to their barrack-room, where they forgot their bravery and became as quiet as two little white mice. A recruit in barracks and a recruit out of barracks are two very different men. . . .

But that was the beginning of a very bad time for Rustum Khan. It was most unfortunate that his tonga was so noticeable. Whenever Messrs. Snooks and Buskins met it in the cantonment or bazaar, and as the Loamshires were at that time enjoying a spell of "light duty," it was fairly often they would jump in and have a free ride. The pony and the tonga suffered greatly in consequence. More than once Rustum Khan himself got a beating. And finally a policeman took the number of the tonga (all cantonment tongas in large stations are numbered and licensed) for reckless driving and Rustum Khan was fined ten rupees by a zealous native magistrate.

"But, Your Honour, it was a drunken British soldier who was driving," Rustum Khan wailed.

"That is an improbable story," said the native magistrate, who was a Hindu and disliked Pathans. "If offence is twice repeated your licence will be cancelled."

Rustum Khan left the court in tears. That this should happen to *him* who had stood so high in the sahibs' graces! But all the sahibs that used to patronise his tonga seemed to have left the station. The Loamshires were a new regiment. Even Major Anderson, the commissioner of police, was a stranger who had just come to Kohat. Rustum Khan had been friendly with his predecessor, but of Major Anderson he knew nothing save that he was reputed to be a hard man.

Nevertheless, it was to Major Anderson that another tonga-wallah advised him to go.

"They say he walks the straight road," this tonga-wallah said. "He is hard as one of our rocks, but he is just and does not favour. Go to him and tell him thy story and without doubt he will have the *ghora-log* [1] punished. He will not favour them because they are of his own race. Always he walks the straight road."

So old Rustum Khan put on his best clothes, hung a wreath of flowers round the white pony's neck, and drove to the police *thana* where Major Anderson held his court. He had seen the Major Sahib from a distance —a tall, thin sahib with red hair and eyes that could pierce to a man's soul. Rustum Khan wished it was the former commissioner sahib he had been going to see. *He* had been stout and jolly and always ready to crack a joke.

But he was not allowed to see Major Anderson Sahib after all. An officious *babu* turned him away at the door. He said the Major Sahib was very busy and had no time to waste upon a mere tonga-wallah. The latter part of that speech was the purest invention on the *babu's* part, but Rustum Khan did not know that. He drove away sadly, reflecting that the sahibs were changing very much for the worse.

That evening Messrs. Snooks and Buskins again commandeered his tonga for one of their periodic joy-rides. They had a collision with a bullock-cart in which one of the silver lamps was bent and inches of paint scraped off the tonga. They said it was Rustum Khan's fault, punched his head, and left him almost *ghazi* [2] with rage. And when a Pathan is *ghazi* with rage things are pretty certain to happen.

Now, anyone who has made a study of

[1] *Ghora-log* = British soldiers. [2] *Ghazi* = mad.

that period of Italian history when the Borgias flourished will recollect that the hiring of skilled assassins to rid you of your enemies was as much a commonplace as the hiring of a cook or a chimney-sweep is in England to-day. If you wanted some noxious gentleman removed, you simply called in an expert who would do the job neatly—at a price. To a certain extent the same practice still flourishes upon the North-West Frontier. If a wealthy *bunnia* [1] decides that it would be good for trade that some commercial rival should die, he acts in very much the same way as an Italian nobleman of a few centuries back would have done. Knife, poison, or bullet—they are all purchasable commodities. The price varies in accordance with the recognised skill of the expert. A really good assassin can charge much more than a mere novice, for the name counts in that trade as much as in any other.

When Rustum Khan went *ghazi* his predominant thought was that Messrs. Snooks and Buskins must die. But he had neither the courage nor the power to do the job himself. And not being a very rich man, he decided to employ a G.P. and not a specialist—what I mean, of course, is that he couldn't pay a high fee to the assassin.

He knew where to go. There is a certain street in Kohat that is called the street of thieves. It is not a nice street. Even the military police leave that street alone. It is the haunt of the bad men of the border and it is there that Frontier raids are hatched. In broad daylight outlaws with a price upon their heads can swagger unmolested along that street. For it is a street of many secrets and many sudden deaths.

It was to that dreaded street that old Rustum Khan went in search of someone who would rid him for ever of Privates Snooks and Buskins. Fifty rupees was what he was prepared to pay. He had a slight acquaintance with a Dogra who kept a not very reputable lodging-house for Hindus near the middle of the street. To him Rustum Khan confided his story and asked for advice.

"*Ghora-log* (British soldiers)?" repeated the Dogra doubtfully. "There will be danger in that killing, and they say that Major Anderson Sahib is a devil from whom no secret can be hid."

"But they must be killed," Rustum Khan said obstinately. "Unless they are killed the beautiful new tonga the old mem-sahib gave will be destroyed."

"Then listen," said the Dogra. "There is a young man—one of the tribe of Mahsuds who dwell in the Zhob valley—that has but lately come to Kohat. He is not known to these police, and they say that he is an outlaw who has had to flee from his own area. Once or twice I have seen him in my house. He has no money, but he has a tongue that is ready as his knife and has made many friends. Doubtless he would be willing to do thy business."

"Where can I meet him?" Rustum Khan asked.

"Possibly he will come to this house this evening," the Dogra said. "But first thou must swear that thou wilt not breathe word of this matter to any man. Remember that Major Anderson Sahib is a devil from whom no secret can be hid."

"I swear," Rustum Khan said.

That evening he met the Dogra's Mahsud friend. The Zhob outlaw was a tall, wolfish young man with white teeth and fierce upturned moustache. He walked with the inimitable swagger of the border outlaw who fears not God nor man nor devil. A great curved knife with ivory handle hung from the belt below his poshteen. His face was muffled in a long linen *pagri* so that only his keen eyes showed.

Old Rustum Khan told his story, and in the telling he wept. He described his pleasure in the beautiful new tonga and how all the sahibs who might have befriended him had left Kohat.

"Such is the justice of the British Raj!" he said. "Because I am old and poor and a mere tonga-wallah, they will not listen to my story. Had I had money with which to bribe the *babu*, I might have spoken to Major Anderson Sahib, but as it was I could do nothing. Who would take the word of a tonga-wallah against that of two of the *ghora-log*? No, the only thing for it is that they must die."

"*Buddha* (old man)," said the outlaw, "the damaging of thy tonga is a small matter to cost the lives of two men. Also it is a dangerous matter to slay *ghora-log*. Would it not be better if thou went again to Major Anderson Sahib? They say he is a just man and walks a straight road."

"Nay," said Rustum Khan. "I tell thee the justice of the British Raj is not for poor men such as I. And in the killing there will be but little danger, for thou art a

[1] *Bunnia* = shopman.

stranger and unknown to the police. Two stabs and it is finished. Then I will give thee thy money and thou canst fly. But if thou art afraid I shall go elsewhere."

"How much dost thou offer?" the Mahsud asked.

"Forty rupees," said Rustum Khan. "It is a fortune for such as thou."

Then there ensued a prolonged haggling. The Mahsud said that he never killed anyone, much less a *ghora-log*, under thirty rupees. Seventy rupees was, he said, what he wanted. At last, however, he agreed to do the job for fifty-five. They touched hands and swore various terrible oaths that neither would betray the other.

Next, the arrangements for the killing had to be made. Rustum Khan had thought it all out. The Mahsud was to take his place in the tonga and to wait outside the cantonment cinema. Of a certainty he would be engaged by Messrs. Snooks and Buskins. He would drive them round the cantonment until they came to a spot under shadow of the Fort wall where he would stop and demand his fee. The *ghora-log* would refuse to pay. Out would come the Mahsud's knife—two lightning stabs—and Kohat would be the richer by the loss of two dishonest men. Then the Mahsud would flee for the Afghan border. . . .

As for Rustum Khan himself—seeing that his unmistakable tonga would be connected with the affair, it would be necessary to establish a very circumstantial *alibi*. But that did not present many difficulties. In the presence of witnesses he pretended to hire out his tonga to the Mahsud for the evening—a thing often done by tonga-wallahs. Also he persuaded his Dogra friend (for a consideration) to promise that, if occasion should arise, he would be ready to swear that Rustum Khan had been in his house at the time of the killing. As a matter of fact, Rustum Khan intended to hide near the Fort, for he wished to see that the Mahsud really carried out his part of the bargain before parting with his fifty-five rupees.

On the whole Rustum Khan felt fairly safe. The mere fact that he was an old and feeble man of good character would be sufficient to absolve him from suspicion. But if the risks had been ten times greater, they would not have deterred him from carrying out his plan. He was out to avenge his wrongs. He was almost *ghazi* with rage, and when a Pathan is *ghazi* he does not pause to weigh his actions very carefully.

Now for the unconscious Messrs. Snooks and Buskins. As Rustum Khan had foreseen (he knew their habits pretty well by now), they went that evening to see Charlie Chaplin in the cantonment cinema. During the intervals they drank much beer. By the time the entertainment was over they were just in the mood to appreciate a moonlit tonga drive round the cantonment.

To their great joy their favourite tonga—the one with the silver lamps and the white pony—was in the rank outside the cinema. They hailed it with hoots and cat-calls. They loved that tonga. Various experiments with other tongas had shown them that it was the best in the stations and that old Rustum Khan was the most easily cowed of all the tonga-wallahs, therefore they took it whenever possible.

This night, however, there was another driver. A young Mahsud, with his *pagri* wrapped round his face like an Arab's face-cloth, crouched in the driver's seat.

"'Ullo!" said Private Snooks. "'Ere's another *hubshi*! Evenin', *hubshi*. 'Ow's your da?"

"My father sick," said the Mahsud in difficult English. "I come fetch officer sahib."

"Ow, you liar!" said Private Buskins. "We *mallum* your lies by this time. Not as 'andsome as your da, are you, *hubshi*? You *chelo* now and drive like 'ell. *Jaldi, jaldi, mallum, hubshi*?"

"Lumme, you don't 'alf sling the *bāt*!" said Private Snooks admiringly.

"It's easy once you get the 'ang of it," said the modest linguist. "But come on, *hubshi*, make the wheels go rahnd."

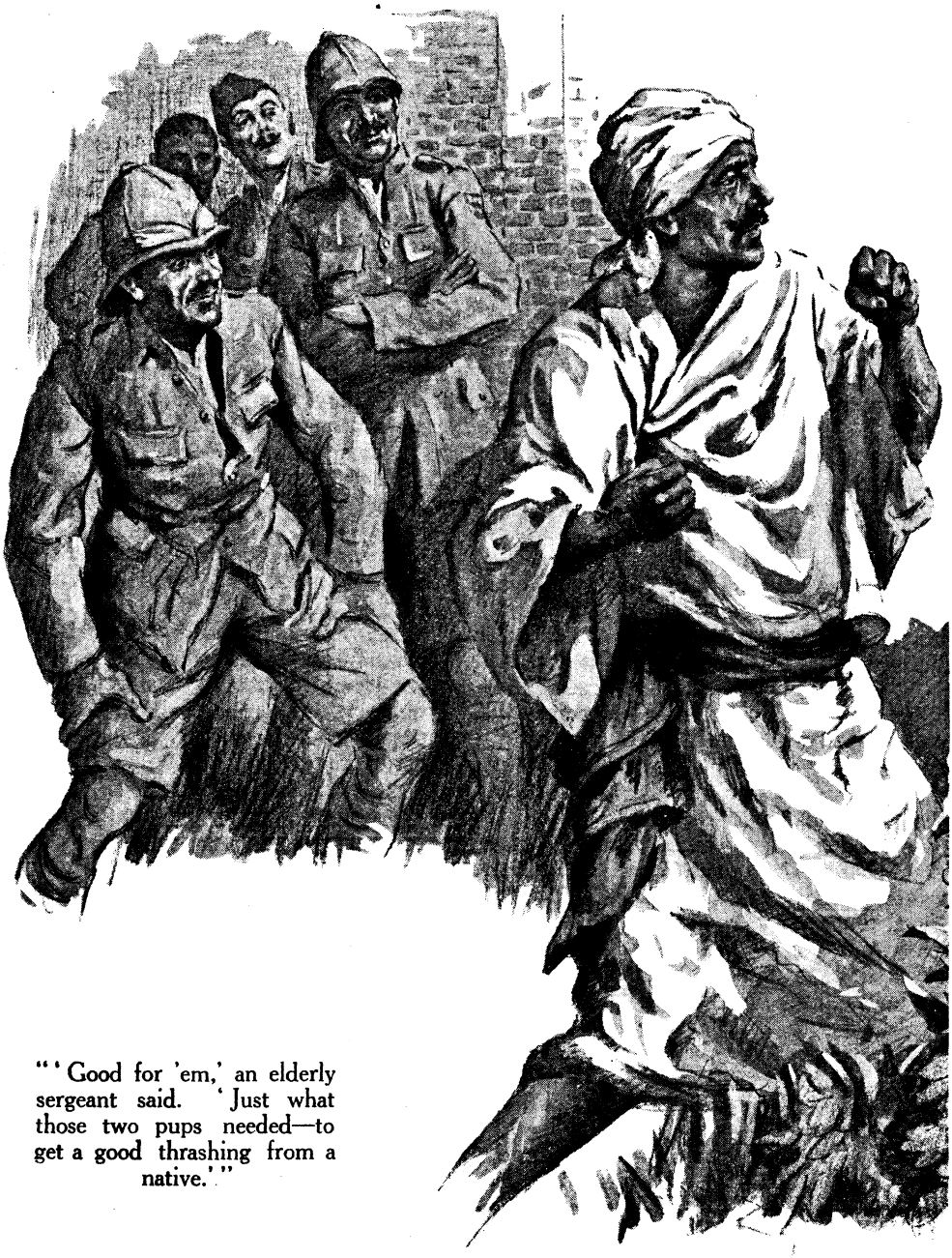
"*Achha*, sahib," said the Mahsud. (Here I had better mention that to call an Indian *hubshi*, which means nigger, is to give him the worst possible insult.)

That drive was very like all the other drives that Messrs. Snooks and Buskins had taken save that, if possible, they behaved worse than ever. They belaboured the willing pony with their swagger canes. When the Mahsud protested in shrill Urdu they clouted his head and threatened to throw him overboard. They threw things at passing inoffensive natives. In short, they gave as fine an exhibition of unchecked hooliganism as it is possible to imagine. Stupidity and lack of imagination was their trouble. They thought that by behaving thus they were showing themselves very fine fellows. The idea that they were letting down their regiment and their race in the

eyes of the natives never occurred to them.

At last they came to the wall of the fort. About fifty yards from the entrance the Mahsud reined in. Rustum Khan, crouching in a near-by ditch, trembled with eagerness. He was very anxious to see his enemies punished. You must remember that he was Pathan and resented insults and injustice much more than a similarly placed Englishman would have done.

"Seven rupees," said the Mahsud, alighting from the tonga.



"'Good for 'em,' an elderly sergeant said. 'Just what those two pups needed—to get a good thrashing from a native.'"

"Seven grandmothers!" said Private Snooks. "Garn, or we'll beat you up like we did your da."

The outlaw's hand stole inside his posh-

teen. He had kicked off his shoes and was barefooted. He crouched like a snake about to strike.

"Wanta fight, do you?" said Private Snooks. "Get out. We don't pay no money to a blinkin' *hubshi*."

He struck the Mahsud with his swagger cane.

That was when things began to happen. The Mahsud struck, but it was with his fist and not a knife. Private Snooks went down on the flat of his back. Private Buskins, rushing to the rescue, got a clout that made him reel.

But they were up in a second, and, breathing fire and vengeance, rushed upon the



despised native. Their shouts drew the attention of the guard. Convinced that there was murder going on, several of the Loamshires came down the road at the double, but when they saw what was happening they stopped and roared with laughter.

"Good for 'em," an elderly sergeant said. "Just what those two pups needed—to get a good thrashing from a native. That'll teach 'em to go brawling in the bazaar and getting the regiment a bad name. Good old Johnny Paythan! You wade in and give 'em socks."

And the Mahsud did give them "socks." He gave them a thorough and scientific thrashing such as only an expert boxer could deliver. To the credit of Privates Snooks and Buskins be it said that they took their licking like men. But mere flesh and blood could not for long withstand that hurricane of blows. When they had each been knocked down about five times they fled, amid the jeers of their comrades.

"They won't try beating up natives again in a hurry!" the sergeant chuckled. "Just as well they had that lesson. Likely enough it's saved them from getting a knife in the ribs one of these fine days. *Shabash*, Johnny Paythan! You're a sport!"

The Mahsud waved his hand in acknowledgment of the soldier's cheers, then strode back to the tonga, turned it and drove round the side of the fort out of sight of the guard. A figure emerged from the shadows. It was old Rustum Khan, and he was shaking with a great fear.

"Who art thou?" he quavered. "Certainly thou art not a man of our race. Art thou an officer-sahib in disguise? I know that thou art not a Mahsud in that thou used thy fists and not a knife."

"Ask not who I am," the Mahsud said. "Suffice it to say that I am a servant of the British Raj and that it is my duty to deal justice to rich and poor alike. Such is the law of the Raj. Remember that, *buddha*, and never again seek to avenge thy wrongs by the knife. Only that thou art an old man and foolish in thy anger, I would put thee in the police *thana* to-night on a charge of attempted murder. But now the matter is forgotten. Stay——"

He produced two ten-rupee notes and placed them in the old man's trembling hand.

"Since the damage to thy tonga was done by servants of the Raj, the Raj must make good thy loss," he said. "Such is our justice. Now, *buddha*, take thy tonga and depart."

He cut short the old man's stammered gratitude and disappeared into the darkness at the side of the road. But before he went Rustum Khan noticed something that made him wonder more than ever. The folds of the *pagri* had come apart, disclosing hair of distinctive red. Only one sahib in Kohat had hair of that colouring.

Rustum Khan has never disclosed the name of his Good Samaritan, but it is a curious fact that whenever Major Anderson, commissioner of police, requires a tonga, he always gets the best one in the station without the smallest trouble. What is still more curious, Rustum Khan always refuses stoutly to take any fee from the Major Sahib, who, he says, walks the straight road. Also, when anyone expresses wonder at the Major Sahib's unholy knowledge of the plots hatched in the street of thieves, Rustum Khan smiles darkly. *He* knows how it is done, but he will never tell.

ESCAPE.

THE bird that flies has all the sky
In which to live;
Yet I must dwell among the streets:
How to forgive
The Fate that set me in the town
Nor gave me wings,
But just a heart to love great space
And far-off things?

D. C. FORMAN.

THE GIRL IN THE ORANGE CLOAK

By LAURENCE MEYNELL

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

"MY dear old Hilly, you must be still suffering from the effects of dinner."

"When you provide dinner, George, I never suffer from any effects; there aren't enough of them."

"But you can't seriously maintain that purple is comparable in its vitality and force to orange."

"Purple has a sort of past to it," tall Hilary said, "but orange only gives indication of a future; *ma foi*, George of my heart, don't think of anything to say to that; it's too hot to argue this evening."

George was saved the trouble of thinking out a reply; in furtherment of his side of the argument he simply raised a hand and pointed ahead of them down the street where, vivid as a wound against the warm June darkness, moved an orange cloak, and under it small, hurrying feet. . . .

"How about your beastly purple now?" said George. "If that hasn't got a past, and a future, I'm a Dutchman. What's the hurry, Hilly?"

Tall Hilary had quickened his steps. "Why does an orange cloak walk so solitarily and so swiftly down Ebenezer Street at ten o'clock at night?" he asked. "I have a *flair* that that cloak has no right to be anywhere but in elegance."

"Black hair," George whispered as they drew nearer their unconscious quarry.

"Dark brown, I think."

"Black," George persisted; "look at it now, under the lamp—gad, isn't that a picture?"

You will get used to Hilary and George arguing; they spent their lives in Rising Moon Yard, where openly they never ceased to criticise each other's work and privately never failed to admire it. Hilary was half French, which gave him a certain advantage in the matter of original invective; but George was stolid English and so quite impervious to sarcasm.

"But it *is* queer," George went on, "because, come to think of it, this street leads to nowhere but the River, and surely she—well, she can't live in any of the houses along here."

"In London," Hilary said, "anyone can live anywhere; you must never be surprised. In the dark ages before I met you, George of my heart, I lived in a stable in Schopenberg Mews and over me lived an attaché from the Ruggerian Embassy; he used to come in very late at night gleaming with ambassadorial accoutrements and making diplomatic noises—also he had a very jolly little wife; Embassy people neglect their wives beautifully, George; I know because——"

"Look out, you great ass."

George's friendly warning was occasioned by the sudden and total stoppage of the orange cloak. It halted just beyond a lamp-post, so that in the down-thrown light it was more vivid and arresting than ever, like some fallen and strayed spot of the long-gone sunset, wandering, an illuminating exile, through the drabness of London streets.

The small head with its black (or deep brown) hair began to turn.

"*Retroussée*," the experienced Hilary prophesied in a whisper.

"Rot," George said, "something southern, I'll bet; aquiline most likely."

But they were both wrong, for the face that turned towards them under the lamplight seemed to have no features at all; it was a ghastly blank of deadly whiteness, marred by two black slits that must have been eyes. For a long and cautious second the girl looked over her shoulder down the street, whilst George and Hilary flattened

themselves against some area railings and watched that dismaying face. Then she turned, ran up the steps to the door of a sinister-looking house, and, lifting the heavy brass knocker, gave three resounding knocks.



There was the noise of a window opening above the doorway, then the head and shoulders of a man appeared surveying the girl inquisitively. He asked something in a voice so low that George and Hilary could not distinguish his words; but the answer from the orange cloak was distinct enough; she looked up and said quite plainly and distinctly, "Mice."

Immediately the window slammed down, and within a few seconds the door itself moved open cautiously and the orange cloak, with its tragic face and its intriguing voice, were swallowed up in the blackness of that tall house.

George and Hilary emerged from the protective darkness.

"Mice," Hilary cried, completely bewildered. "What do you make of that, George? What is this English language where no word means the same thing twice? What else can 'mice' mean besides 'mice,' my English George?"

"Nothing," George said solemnly. "Not on Tuesdays." He drew his everlasting pipe from his pocket and pulled at it meditatively. "But seriously, Hilly," he went on, "one doesn't quite know what to make of all that—did you notice her—her *face*?"

"Notice it? I am wondering how I am ever going to forget it—and then '*mice*'; *ma foi*, George, but the more you think of it the more fantastic does it all become."

"It's a rum go," George agreed, "but still, there it is"; with which comforting piece of philosophy the two friends resumed their walk along the surprising Ebenezer Street. But not for many yards; they were hardly past the House of Strange Happenings when both stopped dead, Hilary gripping his companion by the arm.

"Good Heaven," he cried, "what's that?" Three agonised and inhuman screams had rung out from somewhere in the dark house on their left—three screams and then silence, a sort of cynical, complete silence.

George stood stock-still, his head tilted as though it had been jerked up by that cord of sharp sound, his honest eyes asking all sorts of tentative questions of his com-



"The face that turned towards them . . . was a ghastly blank of deadly whiteness, marred by two black slits that must have been eyes."

panion. "Do you think it was—*she*?" he said at last.

"It was someone," Hilary whispered, "someone, George, in that dark house."

George stuffed his pipe in his pocket. "Come on, Hilly," he said, starting to move briskly, "we'll have two penn'orth of this mice business."

After George had given three shattering blows with the giant brass knocker, the two of them stood looking up expectantly at the window above them.

The house was tall and dark and deadly quiet. Hilary shuddered. "Choirs of Heaven," he said under his breath, "but I don't like that house, George."

The premonitory noises of the window being opened ended in a rasping squeak as the casement was finally flung up and the head and shoulders of the inquisitive man appeared again. He did not seem surprised to see the two figures below him; he simply bent down and in an ingratiating sort of whisper asked, "Who stole the donkey's dinner?"

"Mice," George answered firmly and without any hesitation. It was sufficient; the head withdrew and the window banged down.

"Seems to be fond of mice," said George in the silence that followed. "There he is at the bolts; keep your eye on me, Hilly."

The door was opened and George and Hilary walked into a completely dark and unknown hall. They saw no one, and the door clanged behind them. George described it afterwards as a "bit of a lark"; Hilary had a more complicated French phrase for the experience.

Suddenly there was the click of an electric switch and the hall was flooded in sharp light. A little wizened figure in shirt sleeves, the same that had addressed them from the window, confronted them. "You've come without yer masks," he said.

"Mine's at the wash," George explained. "Sorry. Does it matter?"

"Oh, it don't matter, not to say *matter*," the short man said. "I can fit yer out with a couple. Come in 'ere."

They followed him into a small room on the right; it was bare of furniture save for a table on which, like so many decapitated grinning heads, lay a dozen or more masks. They were all deliberately gruesome in design, but the short man handled them affectionately. "Now, gents," he said with a chuckle, "take yer choice, the 'orribler the better; and, anyway, p'raps it won't matter to one of yer to-morrow what 'e looks like, eh?"

Outwardly George was unmoved by this pleasantry, but he felt devoutly thankful that spines and the cold spasms that occasionally run up and down the bravest of them are invisible things—there was something peculiarly nasty about that little man's greedy, greasy chuckling.

"Hupstairs, gentlemen, please," said the short man, and George and Hilary followed him up the narrow staircase. He threw open a door on the first landing and announced, "Two young gents," to which singular introduction the bemasked George and Hilary entered the room.

It was a large room, and on its floor, from which the carpet had been rolled back, danced five couples to the music of a gramophone. A man and two girls were standing by the window.

Every face was hidden by a gruesome, pallid mask.

"Seem to be in the fashion, anyway," George whispered under his breath. "Take things easy, Hilly; don't get aerated before there's any need for it."

The man standing by the window lounged over to them. "Just puts our numbers right," he said; "I thought you two were never coming. You'd better grab a girl each and start dancing; we shall get down to business in a minute or two."

Hilary nodded and stepped forward; he was good at grabbing girls; but, for all that, George was the lucky one. He discovered it before he had been twice round the room. "I wish I could tell who you are," his partner said; "it's hateful dancing with a mask." George had heard that voice before, and not many minutes previously; it had a suppressed, tremulous vibrancy about it that was unmistakable.

"I think orange looks topping for an evening cloak," he ventured.

"O-oh," she laughed prettily, "so you know me?"

George was non-committal behind his mask.

"Do you think it will be *you*?" she asked.

"Well, it can't be helped if it is," George said.

"No," she reflected, "it can't. Of course, it might be the man who came in with you, though he's a bit tall for it. Hallo, the gramophone's stopped. Now we shall soon know."

The gramophone had indeed stopped, and

the dancers stood about expectantly whilst two masked men brought a light trestle table that had been standing folded against a wall and placed it in the middle of the room.

"Now," said one of the figures, "gather round, comrades, and we will soon see whom Fate chooses for the task."

Without saying more he dealt to each person at the table—including himself—a small oblong piece of white pasteboard. Then, when all had been dealt to, he said in sepulchral tones, "I challenge Fate," and, so saying, slowly turned over the card in his hand. All eyes were riveted on that deliberate action, and as the card finally turned and revealed its underside there was a perceptible loosening of held breath; the card was as blank on one side as on the other.

The girl standing on the man's left then did exactly in like manner, revealing a card as blank as the first; and when she had finished the turn passed to the man next to her, and so on.

George stood seventh from the man at the head of the table; next to him was the girl of the orange cloak, and beyond her, as luck—or good management—would have it, was tall Hilary.

George felt queerly fascinated as one by one the six people before him went through that mysterious little ritual.

It seemed easy enough; one simply said, "I challenge Fate," and turned one's card up, and that was all—if the card was blank. George wondered what happened when the card that was *not* blank should appear.

But for all the simplicity of the thing he found when his turn came that in that deathly silence his voice was none too sure, and under that concentrated gaze—a gaze that could be *felt*—his hand none too steady. He swallowed more easily when he saw the whiteness of his turned-up card.

George was listening now to that vibrant voice on his left, "I challenge Fate." The words came quite clearly, quite unafraid, and then a small white hand reached for the card, held it an instant, then slowly turned it up—its underside was black with a heavily inked **13.**

There was an instantaneous and uncheckable exclamation from all those looking on, something that might have been relief, envy, amusement, pity, all in one—"*A-ah.*"

The man at the head of the table laughed; then, in his low voice, said, "Clear the table away and play the special tune. I claim the privilege of dancing this with you, M'amselle."

A man went to the piano in the corner of the room and a girl took up a ukelele; something masked and eager was impatient in front of George. "Come on," she cried; "whoever you are, let's dance."

Mechanically George began to dance—he was a good dancer and knew most of the favourite tunes by heart, but the tune that was being evolved by the joint efforts of that cracked piano and that mad ukelele was strange; and yet not entirely strange, for as he went round the room and listened to the weird fascination of the thing it seemed to open some pigeon-hole of memory that shut again with a snap before he could look properly into it.

"Jolly good tune, isn't it?" his partner asked.

"It's an uncanny thing," George answered. "What is it?"

"But it's the one we agreed to have," a surprised voice said.

George laughed. "Of course," he said, "but for the moment I've forgotten its name."

"It's the Dead March from Saul, silly," the amused mask protested, "but Carrie syncopated it so that it makes a divine Black Bottom—cold?"

"No, thanks," George said, but for all that he had given an involuntary shudder.

"Who do *you* think got it?" the voice chattered on. "Olive Waddon, *I* think it was—don't you? She'll make a topping corpse."

On the instant the door opened and the small, shirt-sleeved man came into operation again. "Two young gents," he announced in his gloating sort of voice, and withdrew.

The two young gents, complete like everybody else with gruesome masks and dinner-jackets, then walked with great self-assurance into the room. "Sorry we're late," the leading one said cheerily.

Their arrival caused a complete and uneasy stoppage of dancing, and the man who had presided at the head of the table took three quick strides to the door. "There's something funny here," he said; "there are too many of us." A suspicion began to dawn in George's mind that matters were getting unhealthy. "Seven men and six girls there should be," the man was saying, "and hang it, there are nine men!"

A voice from the middle of the room chimed in with, "There must be two spies from Batters in somehow."

" I think we'll all have our masks off, *if* you please," said the man by the door in a grim sort of cheerfulness.

George's suspicions about the unhealthy atmosphere were now cast-iron certainties; he could see the girl, late of the orange cloak, standing close by the door. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed her small hand move up to her mask, but his curiosity as to what lay behind that monstrosity went unsatisfied, for there was suddenly a terrific crash and crackle of glass and the room was plunged into darkness. Hilary's voice rang out over the babel of the room in a heartening shout, " All together, George, bolt for it."

George was bolting.

He had one hand full of door-knob and one of femininity; and George, when he was once really started, took a lot of stopping. " Come on, Hilly," he shouted from the top of the dark stairs, " I've got her."

The room behind was in terrific uproar. George could hear the unreproducible *sss-smack* of bare fists against bare flesh; there were the thuds of falling bodies and a medley of shouting. One voice louder than the rest rang out, " Cut and run, Olive; don't let them st——" It ended abruptly, and George, half-way down the stairs, grinned grimly.

The staircase was suddenly shaken by tremendous footsteps behind. " Fly, George of my heart," tall Hilary's happy voice cried. " I've locked the door and they're annoyed about it."

George was flying, but now without certainty or satisfaction; his one hand no longer clutched femininity. " She's gone," he said, halting towards the bottom of the stairs; " she slipped away, poor little devil; she's dead frightened, I expect; she must be somewhere in the hall."

" Waters of Jordan," Hilary panted over George's shoulder, " what a place!"

George nodded, straining eyes and ears for any movement or sound from about them; but the hall was darker than the stairs, and there was a battering and a clamour from the upper room that made all listening useless.

Suddenly a yellow blade of light sliced into the darkness of the hall; it was the front door opening and admitting the glare from a street lamp.

" She's going out," George cried, " come on"; but for all their swiftness the door had banged to again before they reached it, and minutes, priceless minutes, were wasted whilst George fumbled in the darkness with the latch.

" Aunt of my aunt," Hilary groaned, " what a door, George! Is it unopenable?"

Suddenly the door yielded and they were precipitated on to the pavement.

Something shimmering and unmistakable was hurrying into the distant darkness that was the end of Ebenezer Street. Without a word, the two men started to run desperately after it.

The girl of the orange cloak had three minutes' start, but her pursuers had long legs and they gained on her fast. Fortune favoured her, for at the very top of Ebenezer Street, when George and Hilary were not more than thirty yards behind, a prowling taxicab appeared, soliciting fares along the main road. The girl hailed it, shouted something to the driver, and jumped in.

Hilary and George stood panting on the edge of the pavement, watching that disappearing tail light. " Beaten on the post," George groaned, " beaten by half a head, beaten by——"

But Hilary, who understood nothing about half-heads and posts, was gripping his arm. " George," he whispered urgently, " we can't believe that this is another taxicab, can we?"

George looked where his friend's long arm was pointing. " Heaven," he cried, " I can," and forthwith launched himself in the roadway and executed a series of contortioned gesticulations that would have arrested an earthquake.

The receding rear light was still visible down the long, straight road. " You see that tail lamp?" George said to the driver.

" Tail lamp, guv'nor, what abaht it?"

" Follow it, quickly," said George, jumping in.

" And *catch it*," Hilary added, thrusting his great head and shoulders in front of the driver; " *catch it, mon ami.*"

" Blimey, gov'nor," the man cried, startled, " you must be in a nurry."

George sank back on the seat panting.

" You surprise me to-night, George," Hilary said; " always have I thought you the phlegmatic Englishman. Never have I known you so amorous. What exactly makes you so anxious to abduct the little girl?"

" Good Heavens," George cried, sitting bolt upright, " I'm not abducting the girl, Hilly. Don't you realise what that place was?"

" It seemed a trifle eccentric," Hilary ventured.



"'Now,' said one of the masked figures, 'gather round, comrades, and we will see whom Fate chooses for the task.'"

"Eccentric?" George almost shrieked. "You're a pretty cool sort of customer. I should just say it *was* eccentric; that place is a suicide club."

"Suicide; so?" Hilary gave a long whistle. "What fellows you English are for clubs. They all seemed very jolly about it."

"Didn't you realise what they drew numbers for? That girl has to be a corpse to-morrow."

"*Mon Dieu,*" Hilary said, suddenly growing serious, "but is this true, George?"

"You bet the Bank of France it's true," George declared; "some skunk of a pessimist with a twisted soul has got hold of the girl and made her see things all wrong, and now the poor kid's in a sort of ecstasy of self-annihilation; that's why we've got to get hold of her, and get hold of her quick."

Hilary digested this tragic aspect of the case in silence.

"We're gaining slowly," George said, peering ahead.

"Slowly," the tall Hilary exploded; "*ma foi,* but I'll give this son of a pink-snouted pig 'slowly.'" He stuck his huge shoulders through the window and spoke very close to the driver's large red ear. "*Mon ami,*" he said, in a voice as cold and cutting as ice, "if you don't extract about double the present amount of speed from this decrepit, clattering muck-cart of yours I shall be put to the troublesome business of destroying you."

The man took a single startled look at the determined face from which those strange words issued, and thereafter they went more quickly.

It was a long and stern chase; sometimes Hilary and George were within hailing distance of their quarry, sometimes they would be in despair lest they should lose touch with that tantalising red danger signal. But the hour was late and the roads were fairly clear; moreover, their driver had Hilary's sinister threat ringing in his ears, and somehow they always managed to avoid totally missing the scent.

George knew his London pretty well and had not much difficulty in keeping a rough account of where they were.

"Weston Square," he announced as, hot on the heels of the elusive rear lamp, they swung round a sudden corner. "Hallo, she's turned up one of the drives."

Weston Square is one of those rapidly disappearing spots in London where a few substantial houses stand, old-fashionedly secluded and proud, each in the possession of its own garden.

Suddenly the quiet of the night was shattered by a loud and ominous report from a drive hard on their left.

"Heaven, she's done it already!" George cried, and, hardly waiting for the car to stop, he jumped from it and ran desperately in the direction of the sound.

Hilary followed him hot-foot. "*Mon ami,*" he panted, "we're too late."

They rounded a bend in the drive and saw, before the door of the square house, the fatal taxicab; the driver stood contemplating something in a sort of resigned dismay.

He glanced up at the sound of gravel flying from under swift feet.

"Is she dead?" George gasped.

"Dead?" the man asked, a little startled. "'Ow do you mean, guv'nor, dead? Is 'oo dead?"

"The girl—Heavens, man, the girl you were driving."

The driver looked quickly from one white face to the other; the joke escaped him. "Well," he said at last, "if she is 'er ghost 'as just walked into the 'ouse; *and* given me a decent tip and all. Lady, that's what she is."

He pushed his cap back from his forehead and scratched his hair. "Just my luck," he grumbled, "to get a blooming blow-out this time o' night."

Slowly George and Hilary lowered their eyes to contemplate the flat rear tyre. "Name of a name," Hilary whispered after a considerable silence, "but what a relief."

The driver apparently thought it would be wiser to conduct his repairs somewhere less liable to explosive and startling interruption, for mumbling something about not having very far "to get 'ome," he entered his cab and bumped away on a flat tyre.

The two men stood uncertainly in the porch of that law-abiding, substantial-looking house. "*Que faire?*" asked Hilary at last. "Now what do we do, my George?"

George had not time to answer the question before Fate did it for him; there was the noise of a car drawing up at the gate, a respectful "Good night, Sir Basil," from a chauffeur, and footsteps, well-fed, leisurely footsteps, came towards them up the drive.

The owner of the footsteps appeared slightly surprised on seeing the two figures before the door, but he addressed them easily and quietly as one gentleman speak-

ing to others. "You were wanting me?" he asked.

"That's more than I can tell you," George said. "Who are you?"

"I am Sir Basil Waddon, and this is my house."

"Waddon," George cried, "that's the name. You have a daughter, sir?"

Sir Basil nodded.

"By name Olive?"

Again the affirmative nod, but there was a suggestion of formality and stiffness about it, a hint that the situation was wearing a bit thin.

"Well, for Heaven's sake," George burst out, "stop her, Sir Basil; she's going to commit suicide."

"Suicide?" The man started back aghast, and looked quickly from George's set face to Hilary's wild one. Both of them were hatless, both were still flushed from running. Hilary was dishevelled from his glorious half-minute in that darkened room. "What on earth do you mean?" Sir Basil asked.

"It's true," Hilary broke in, "*Mon Dieu*, but terribly true—suicide, self-destruction, you know," he added in thoughtful explanation; "perhaps she'll do it with a pistol."

Again Sir Basil glanced at them both quickly.

"There's no time to be lost," George urged; "we chased her here hot-foot."

"But—really this is astonishing. I—er—I—I hardly—do you know my daughter?"

"Never been introduced——"

"You say you chased her here?"

"As fast as we could."

"But this grows more and more inexplicable. My daughter dined here alone and, to the best of my knowledge, has been here all the evening. She——"

"A fig for the best of your knowledge," Hilary cried, and added, with bitter memories prompting the advice, "No man ever knows anything about a woman's whereabouts—for all we know your daughter dined at Buckingham Palace, but she was at a suicide club not long after——"

"A suicide club?"

George could see that Hilary was straining the complicated situation perilously near the danger mark. "Look here, sir," he said, taking the bewildered Baronet urgently by the arm, "it may sound silly, it *does* sound silly, it sounds incredible, but it's true——"

"What's true?"

"About this club, this suicide club——"

"But it's—it's preposterous. Why, Olive's uncle is a Bishop. Besides, how could she get into a suicide club?"

"Mice." The word exploded from Hilary, and there was a familiar break in his voice which gave George apprehensions at the bottom of his spine.

"*Mice?*"

"Mice," Hilary repeated, "small rodents, you know. Oh, *ma foi*, but isn't it fantastically funny, horribly humorous?" Then he started to laugh—an uncontrollable, despairing laugh that rang out into the night. No Englishman, especially a Baronet with a Bishop for a brother, understands why Frenchmen laugh when they do. George felt the apprehensions climbing steadily up his spine and numbing him into hopeless inaction.

"I think you two young gentlemen must have had more wine than wisdom for your dinner," Sir Basil Waddon said very dryly. "No one appreciates a good practical joke more than I do, but there is a right time for everything, and if you have any sense you will go away now, at once, and quietly; otherwise I shall be compelled to summon the constable who is on duty just round the corner of the Square."

George always swears that it was Hilary who moved first. Hilary says it may have been, but that he saw the suggestion dawning in George's practical eye and he took his cue from that. Anyway, as far as Sir Basil Waddon was concerned, the result was much the same; a strong leg suddenly tripped him, sinewy arms enveloped him, he was gagged with his own white scarf, bound hand and foot by two white silk handkerchiefs.

"We're sorry," said George as they deposited Sir Basil with great care under a laurel bush, "but you are in an incredulous mood and there simply isn't time to stop and convert you, there really isn't. And anyway," he added by way of encouragement, "they're clean handkerchiefs—at least mine is; I won't answer for Hilly's. Now, Hilly, how do we get in?"

"Through the door. *Mon ami*; that is what doors are for, you know. Sir Basil is very kindly lending us his key—*voilà!*" Whilst he was speaking tall Hilary had been bending over the prostrate Baronet, extracting a bunch of keys from his pocket.

"Good for you," George said. "I expect it's the Yale one."

Sir Basil, deprived of speech, could only

glare; but he *did* glare. Hilary noticed those eyes particularly; murder was the least thing in them.

But George had no time for eyes, at least not for Sir Basil's. "Come on," he said, moving towards the door; "we must get hold of that girl."

It turned out that it was "the Yale one," and they moved into the spacious hall as easily and pleasantly as could be.

"I say," Hilary whispered when they were once inside, "do Baronets burst, George?"

"Not English ones," George assured him; "they sometimes foam at the mouth, but I don't believe there's ever been an authenticated instance of one bursting—hallo, what's that?"

"That" was a gramophone, at least a noise presumably issuing from a gramophone, a lively Charleston tune. "*Mon Dieu,*" Hilary said with horror in his voice, "but the little lady won't—won't do it *to music*——"

"Come on," was all George said.

She looked up as they entered, and the paper she was reading slipped from her hands in amazement.

"You——" she cried. "But how on earth did you get here?"

"We followed you," George explained, trying to look as though he were accustomed to this sort of thing, "and—well, we just walked in."

"Don't do it, little lady," Hilary begged, "don't do it."

"But why shouldn't I?" she cried with pretty anger. She was standing in the chiaroscuro made by a tall lamp, facing them unafraid. "I mean I can quite see that you don't want me to, of course—that's only natural; and if you had collared me at the club or in the road I should have rather admired you for it; but you know the rules as well as I do; you know perfectly well that our own houses are absolutely taboo——"

"Sacred name," Hilary whispered, "but what English idiocy is this? Do people kill themselves according to rules——"

Perhaps she hadn't heard him, for she went on: "I must say it was jolly smart of you to get in for the draw. We thought we'd made it pretty safe, what with passwords and everything; nobody had the slightest idea that anyone from Batters was there. As a——"

"Half a moment," George begged; "that's the second time I've heard that word to-night. What *is* Batters?"

There was such sincere aggrievement in his voice that the girl emerged from the chiaroscuro the better to examine these strange intruders.

"You're not from Batters?" she asked.

George shook his head blankly. "Sorry," he said, "but I've never heard of Batters in my life."

"Am I going mad?" poor Olive said. "Or are you, or what?"

"It is always madness to kill oneself," Hilary assured her in fatherly tones; "only a sick soul can do so terrible and blasphemous a thing."

George saw the whiteness suddenly creep over that pretty face, saw the Adam's apple in the small throat move up and down a trifle apprehensively, saw the quick glance around her.

"Ah, Miss Waddon," he begged, taking half a step towards her, "think, think before you do anything desperate. You may not know us, nor we you, but, oh, believe me, we are to be trusted. We are here for your own sake; we are young, as you are; we enjoy life, as you should do; we can see the beauty, the quickening, all-sufficient beauty of everyday life, as surely you must be able to do. Think, ah, think again, before you make up your mind to forgo the tremendous privilege of wrestling with trivialities. Accidentally we have found out your secret; we know about the suicide club——"

"*Suicide* club?"

"We know all," Hilary assured her in an expansive sort of foreign way.

"It seems to me," the girl said in icy business-like tones, "that you know absolutely nothing at all; and I don't quite understand what you are doing here. You may not be aware of it, but to-morrow is the day for formally closing down the medical school attached to Batterways Hospital, and you may imagine they are rather sore about it; still, we can't help that, and we decided——"

"Who is 'we'?" George managed to ask faintly.

"Eastchapel College Hospital, of course. I'm an Easter; I've been there three years. Naturally, we decided to give Batters a jolly good leg-haul over this, so we made plans to have a mock funeral and we decided to draw lots for the honour of being corpse——"

"Excuse me," George gasped, "I think I'll sit down."

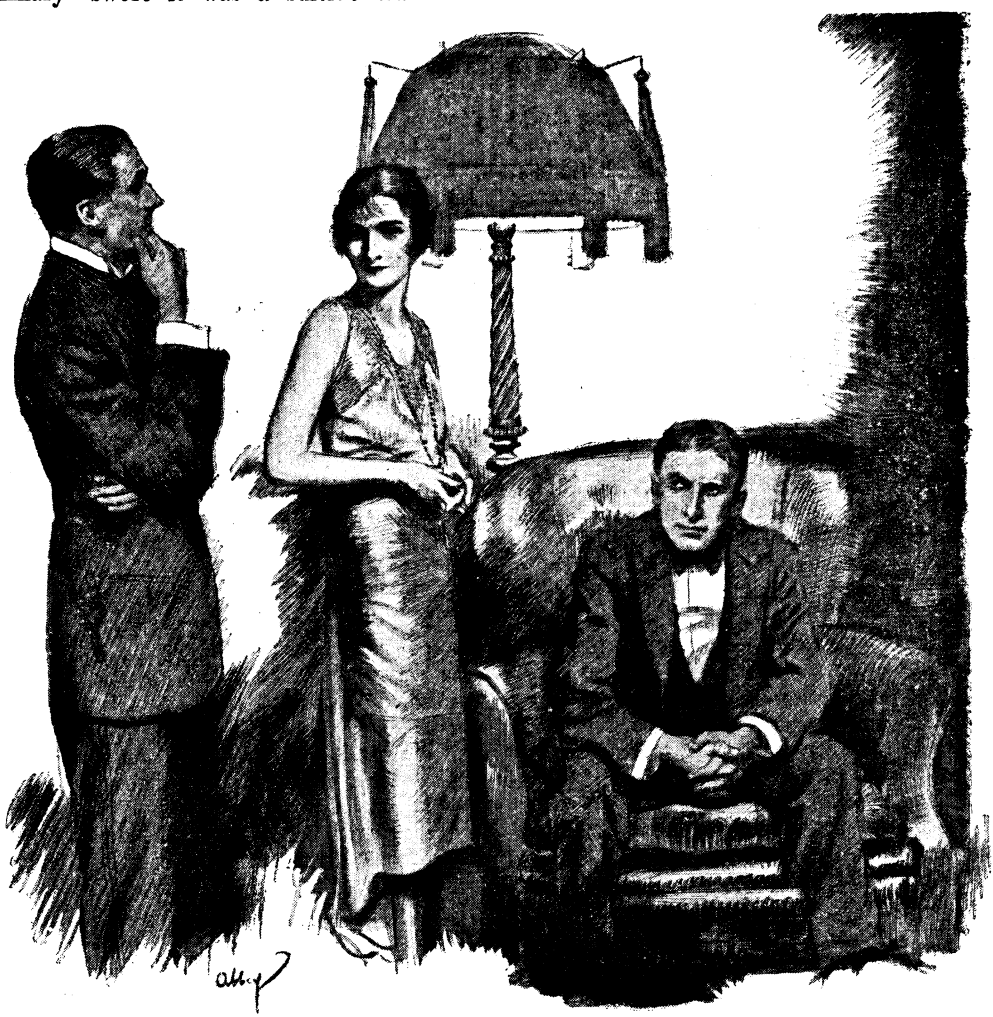
"And we thought we might as well do the thing properly and have masks and so on, just to make it look convincing."

"Oh, it was convincing enough," George whispered. "Of course, *I* suspected all along it was a joke; but Hilary—this is Hilary—swore it was a suicide club and

"And you took all this trouble to save me?"

Hilary bowed like the natural courtier he was. "How can waiting on a princess be a trouble?" he asked.

The girl looked at each man in turn, Hilary tall and upright in the centre of the room, George cushioned and comfortable in an arm-chair.



"'And you took all this trouble to save me?' the girl asked."

that you were drawing lots as to who was to kill himself; and so—well, I mean, we just followed you out to see that you didn't do anything silly."

"Did you really think that?" the girl asked, taking a step towards tall Hilary.

"Well, we thought it between us, didn't we, George?" Hilary said, smiling glumly.

"I—I think it was extraordinarily nice of you," she said, smiling; "thank you both very much indeed—good gracious, who's that?"

There was the sound of footsteps, light and cautious, in the hall. "You must have left the hall door open," Olive reprimanded George.

The footsteps came nearer, hesitated for

an instant outside the room, and then came carefully in. "Oh," Olive cried, relief and amusement in her voice, "it's Jim."

It was the tall man who had presided at that strange club where one said "Mice" to enter and fought to get away; and behind him were three or four other young men and women.

Jim looked none too favourably on Hilary and George; it was to be noted that his left eye carried the beginnings of a wonderful colour-scheme.

"So they caught you?" he began ominously, but Olive cut him short. "It's all a stupid mistake," she said, laughing; "these are two very good friends of mine; you must all be introduced to them and like them, please. This tall one is Mr. Hilary and the other——"

"George," came a hoarse prompt from the chair.

"—is Mr. George, and they have absolutely nothing to do with Batters, have you?"

"I loathe the place," George said heartily.

"A *bas les Batters*," Hilary cried.

Jim looked not a little puzzled. "Well, I—I suppose it's all right," he said at last, "but why did they butt in at all?"

"Oh, we came in," George explained airily, "because of the screams."

"Screams?"

"How do you mean—'screams'?" Olive asked.

"We were going by and we heard three inhuman screams, so we thought it was up to us to turn in and take a look round, didn't we, Hilary?"

Hilary nodded.

"Scr—— Did you hear them just after I went in?" Olive asked.

"Almost immediately."

Olive laughed; it is not too much to say that she gave every symptom of being ill with laughter. "But they *were* inhuman," she gasped between great shaking bursts of mirth, "and they weren't screams—they were screeches. Haven't you ever heard a parrot screech before? Old Freddy, the caretaker, has one; and I remember now, just after I came in, it did let out a most unearthly noise."

George sat down again.

"Yes, but look here," said one of the girls from behind Jim, in the tone of one who still wants a small problem settled, "what about your father, Olive?"

"Oh, I don't suppose Dad will be back for an hour yet. He's playing cards at Lancaster Gate."

"Lancaster nothing," Jim snorted; "at the present moment your father's under a bush."

"Under—under a *bush*?"

"Yes, in the front drive, gagged and bound and trussed up like a prize fowl. We saw him as we came up the drive. Dick and Tony are sorting him out; they'll be in at any moment."

George rose from his seat unobtrusively, but with decision. His eye caught the startled one of Hilary.

"Good night," said George; "sorry to leave the party just as we were getting friendly, but it's Hilary's bath night."

"You're going?" Olive faltered. But George had already half gone; his hand was busy with the catch of the French window. "But not that way," the girl cried.

"We prefer it," George assured her; "it's nearer for us. Hilly lives in Paris, you know. Come on, Hilly."

Hilary was coming, but he found time to be courteous over that outstretched hand.

"Good night," he whispered; "we admired your cloak."

IN A STUDIO.

YOU showed me many a lovely thing
Among your coloured store,
Pastels, oils, or black and white
Queer etchings of the war.

But the only thing I took with me
From out that quiet place,
Was the remembered, undisturbed
Grave beauty of your face.

HELEN MORRIS.

MR. BUFFUM GETS PUT INTO HIS PLACE

By HUGH DE SÉLINCOURT

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

"WHAT are we to do about it?" Niece Lucia asked Marion, her friend, in troubled perplexity. "The old man will be a lost soul without Monnie's father and mother. Simply a lost soul."

"I know," Marion agreed. "We must do something. They've only just bought Hurston Hall. Won't be living there till next summer."

Sad silence brooded over the friends, whose faces puckered in thought.

The bad news Marion brought was that Samuelson—the great Albert Samuelson, of Samuelson & Samuelson, had purchased Hurston Hall, a large place in Mr. Buffum's neighbourhood, and had decided to engage Ben, Monnie's father, as head gardener. Ben had beaten him at a Sutton rose show, and Samuelson, running across Ben at various other flower shows, had taken one of his violent fancies to him.

"What's he want with another place, anyhow?" said Lucia bitterly. "He's got three already."

"They've given up their place on the river."

A vicious snort, then again sad silence which the suddenness of Lucia's interruption burst like a paper bag.

"Uncle's such a fatuous old donkey he'd push Ben into the job—for his good. And I believe Ben would be wretched for all his money and greenhouses and potting sheds and men under him and all that the heart of any gardener could dream of or hope for."

Marion laughed, somewhat sceptically.

"You trip a bit at the end, don't you?"

A face of angry question was turned to her.

"Truth will out!" Marion explained.

"I wish you'd had the gumption to say at once that Ben was a dipsomaniac or something. Then we should have heard no more about it!"

"I never thought of that! I might have thrown out lurid hints, but I concentrated on keeping quiet about the old man, so that he would not get pestered by the Samuelsons."

Into Lucia's morose gloom she dropped the gentlest of suggestions.

"It is possible to get another gardener, you know. And gardeners are a very nice race of men."

But Lucia snapped out: "That's just it. He's not like a gardener. He's a friend. I've never seen anything like it before. I can't be clear about it. Uncle loves being with him, doing jobs with him, talking with him. Loves quarrelling with him. He'll just"—she paused: then brought out with emphasis heavy as a groan—"miss him."

"The old man is wonderful," said Marion in a soothing voice. "He once told me that Ben was a great gentleman disguised as a working man."

"Ah, he meant it, too!" Lucia rapped out, unwilling to be soothed, angry that she could not make Marion feel the strange bond that linked the two men. She tilted her head back to add: "And I agree with him, now. I understand exactly what he means: and it's true."

She sank back into gloom. "We don't even know whether he'll be able to keep young Monnie. Where would he sleep? And the new people would be certain not

to get on with Eliza." She smiled a woe-begone smile: "Sorry. But he's such an old lamb!"

"Well, we won't forebode evil. Ben's not gone yet. You'll be with the Old Man to-morrow, and you can see that he's not too quixotic. I say, do you know what makes the Old Man so rare and strange, so different?"

"What do you mean exactly?"

"Well, what other man do you know of his age that's still capable of strong affection?"

Lucia ceased to be gloomy: she looked interested and pleased.

"I'd never thought of it like that," she said. "That *is* the secret of him!"

"People have become like bad habits round most men of his age—which they can neither break from nor be reconciled to."

Lucia snapped gay fingers, brisk and defiant: "Deuce take the beastly world. Why should affection be so rare?"

MEANWHILE Mr. Buffum was not quite coming up to the scratch—the high scratch or the deep scratch of his young friend's warm appreciation. He had fallen far below the high standard suggested by their little encomium. He awoke as the noblest have been known to do, cross. There was only one side on which he could get out of his bed, and that was the wrong one. To make matters worse, it was a sunny still morning whose beauty he saw but could not feel. He behaved, of course, with perfect propriety, pointing out in the kindliest manner that the toast was tough, the bacon salt and the tea slightly over-drawn; so it was a shock to have Eliza look him up and down and ask seriously and firmly and without any malice: "Are you sickenin' for something, then?" He forgave her instantly for the wish to saddle him with her delinquencies and answered with a smile: "Not that I am aware of, thank you!"

He had hardly put his nose outside the door to draw in spiritual refreshment from the beauty of the morning, when Monnie dashed up to him, startling him unpleasantly.

"I say, Gov'nor," the imp shouted, excited. "Dad's caught the biggest mole ever. Come and have a look."

Fancy being expected to gloat over the corpse of a dead animal on such a morning—a mole too, *nature's mute monk. Live mandrake of the soil*—as Coleridge said. But not for a moment did his virtue forsake him.

"No, Monnie!" he said. "Thank you very much. I'm sure your father will be very pleased; the poor little creature was doing great harm to his seedlings."

Monnie stared at him and sloped off abashed without a word, as though a pail of water had been poured over his young ardour.

"Sulky little beast!" thought Mr. Buffum. "Just because I don't wish to begin the day by inspecting a dead animal, he can't even be civil. Preposterous! Why should I do everything an absurd boy wants?"

An unanswerable question, of course.

Virtue took him out for a good brisk walk, and took his temper with him. He was not a man to mope and idle. But virtue took him a little too far: he came back hot and tired instead of refreshed and invigorated. At lunch Eliza's eyes inquired into him in a way he did not like at all, and he liked it even less when she announced that in her thinking he ought to take a proper rest in the afternoon.

Because the woman had nursed him efficiently when he had the influenza, was that any reason why she should perpetually fuss over him like an old hen, clucking?

Another unanswerable question.

He decided instantly to start chopping down bracken and undergrowth with a swop-hook in the wild part: what he wanted was not a rest but violent exercise to make him sweat.

Mr. Buffum fancied himself with a swop-hook, and he certainly did use it less clumsily than when he first handled it: he was in no immediate danger of severing a finger or gashing his calf. But the slow, smooth certainty with which Ben advanced into the tangled mass, never hurrying, never stopping, never going over the same ground, was not his. He did not quite know where to hit or how to hit: and, much to Ben's amusement, he wasted time and strength in heaving cut heaps far back out of his way instead of twisting them quietly behind him.

Nevertheless Mr. Buffum, remembering his first efforts with a swop-hook, fancied himself in its use. On this particular occasion his fancy towered high, uplifted to tottering by an admixture of moral complaisance that he should be doing useful manual work at all. He saw himself in a fair light, labouring on the earth. One of God's own

simple children—no doubt a refreshing spectacle, even an elevating one.

Upon this complaisance the voice of Ben broke, rudely disturbing: "Whatever sense there is in cluttering into it so how! Looks like a bloomin' battlefield and you the silly way! Have it yer own way! But you'd do twice the good with half the trouble if you set about it properly."

"Shut up! Shut up! I never pretended to be able to use a hook like you," Mr. Buffum called out over his shoulder, his



"'I say,' said Mr. Buffum in icy fury, 'just clear out. Do you mind? I can't stand being watched and jeered at.'"

'ero. Blood on yer hands: blood and sweat on yer face. I never see such a sight!"

Mr. Buffum, both startled and irritated, replied sharply: "I prefer to do it as I like!"

Ben openly jeered: "Oh, have it yer own bad temper sore as a bad boil. He slashed at a long bramble and came near cutting an unwary hand, as he overhit himself. The clumsiness did not soothe him.

"Cooh! Look at that, now," Ben jeered. "For any's sake be careful what you're at!

Blow me if a bloomin' kid couldn't do it better."

"I say," said Mr. Buffum in icy fury, "just clear out. Do you mind? I can't stand being watched and jeered at."

"Oh, ah!" said Ben. "Sure thing. Turns me sick seein' you with that thing in yer 'and, the mad way you hacks round with it."

And he went slowly off, provocatively humming, and ostentatiously rustling the pages of the bulb catalogue, which he had brought for consultation on the choice of bulbs for the following year. Mr. Buffum remembered too late the arrangement which had been made the day before: too late, to recover from his exhibition of temper.

Curse the fellow! He took a savage glee in putting him in the wrong: in being irritating.

Affection ill sorts with vanity, in any of us. The streak of vanity in Mr. Buffum was not large, but was swollen by his bad mood painfully. He became suddenly tired and very unhappy. As soon as horrible Ben had got clean away, he left off his job and dragged himself into the house, dejected and ashamed; while Ben, chuckling, made his slow way to the cottage, where he informed his wife that the Governor wasn't half in a stink. "Fair blared out at me, he did; and me only havin' a game same as usual 'bout his swoppin'."

To him Mrs. Ben replied, laughing: "Why, you can't leave him be when a blind man could see as his harness hasn't fit him all the whole day. But there! You men are all alike. Must be plaguin' someone. The poor old Gov'nor!" And she laughed again.

It is awkward to feel like a little boy and to be curbed by years and respectability from acting like a little boy. Had Mr. Buffum slapped Ben's face and had his own head well clouted in return, all would have passed off pleasantly. But such things cannot, of course, be with grown men. When a man of fifty feels at all he takes infinite pains to deck out his absurdities of feeling in decorousness and dignity.

"What a pity!" ruminated Mr. Buffum sadly. "Oh, a thousand pities! That a man so fine in many ways as Ben could take pleasure in being so irritating."

And after he had taken his bath, was in clean clothes and felt better in body and mind, he ruminated more sadly still what a pity it was—oh a thousand and one pities!—that he himself should be so irritable, such a creature of moods, so irritable.

Tea he enjoyed, and was able to take the last step but one towards complete recovery, for he suddenly laughed out loud. "What an ass I am!" he thought with astonishing clarity. "Still, the old fool knows what an ass I am and won't mind."

And being Mr. Buffum—acting, so to speak, on the very Buffumness of Buffum—he decided to visit the cottage and announce this illuminating discovery. And directly he had finished his tea he went. As he crossed the garden he looked a well-dressed, rather distinguished, alert gentleman of middle age, but there was that in him that resembled a small boy in disgrace propelled along by a large policeman's strong hand grasping the collar of his jacket. He was propelled straight through the back door into the kitchen, where Ben and Mrs. Ben were finishing their teas, Monnie being absent on Boy Scout business. He closed the door and stood looking at Ben for a moment before he announced: "Sorry, I lost my wool."

"Ah! I'm blowed if you didn't half snap my head off!" Ben answered in what was meant to be a stern, fierce voice, and he continued: "Nice time, too, to be comin' in for a cup o' tea. And if you think I'm goin' to let you have this place, you got took in. See?" And he settled himself more firmly in the chair which, having arms, was usually kept for Mr. Buffum when he took tea in the cottage.

"If it comes to that," laughed Mr. Buffum, "I'd lug you out of it for tuppence." And he sat down in the arm-chair, away from the table.

"Nice way of going on. Pay no attention to *him*. He's an awful man," said Mrs. Ben, pouring him out a cup of tea,

"As a matter of fact, I thought we might run through the bulb catalogue. I have brought the order form"—he produced it, and added defiantly, "also my fountain-pen"—having on a previous occasion found Ben's pen in the cottage scratchier than a pen in a post office. There followed a pleasant party poring over the fat catalogue on the kitchen table, which Mrs. Ben had cleared, and by which she sat, sewing. They ordered some extra fine hyacinth bulbs and 500 more tulips than they had ever run to before.

Mr. Buffum returned in a happy glow from the cottage, very keenly aware of what those two dear people meant in his life. And

Niece Lucia was beginning to see Ben's real quality and appreciate them both. It made Mr. Buffum happy when people of whom he was fond were able to recognise each other. Ben and Niece Lucia, he reflected, were alike in their independence, and in their terrible outspokenness, though their vocabulary differed. Both stood on their human honesty, proudly like trees in the earth, a lithe young birch and a gnarled large oak—this slip of a modern girl—this old countryman staunch in earth-lore.

Niece came soon after and very soon she blurted out what was to her the news of impending badness: Marion had learned from Miss Samuelson, whose miniature she had painted, that her father had taken Hurston Hall and that his horrid heart was set on having Ben for his head gardener.

The shock knocked Mr. Buffum straight over; but he rose from the count quite convinced that it was the best news he had heard for a very long time. It would obviously be the making of Ben and his family. True, he would not see him quite so often: would miss him in the garden. But what was that compared with such a chance for Ben—with greenhouses and potting sheds and men under him and such a position: really a chance for him to show his worth? It was absurd that a man like Ben should be running a little tinpot-show like his own. "He's such an obstinate old duffer, he may think he is not up to such responsible work: rubbish, of course, rubbish. I shall have to see to that! He's such a creature of habit, too, he may feel he doesn't want a change, or some nonsense of that kind."

Niece growled a protest to this unselfish exuberance. "I can understand your not wanting to stand in his way, Old Man," she said. "But I'm bothered if I see why you should push him into Samuelson's arms. It's just silly: just quixotic. I shall beg him not to go."

"My dear girl," cried Mr. Buffum. "My dear girl. You must do no such thing."

"How long's he been with you?"

"Ten years. Yes, it must be ten years!"

"Well, I shall think less of him if he does go."

Mr. Buffum uttered a volley of expostulatory tuts at her complete inability to see what he considered to be *the point*, and he hurried out of the room—it was just before dinner—to ask Eliza, would she mind going to the cottage with a message that he very much wanted to see Ben at 9.15 that evening?

Niece was furious. "I'd never have told you," she said, "if I thought you'd have been such an old idiot. You've no idea how you'll miss him."

Mr. Buffum looked at her. "I think I have," he said very quietly. "I think I have."

"It's one thing not to stand in his way: it's quite another thing to push him off."

She continued her battery against his quixotic foolishness without avail; and a sulky, baffled Niece got up not at all prettily when Ben announced himself by a loud rap, on which he entered. She paused, searching her mind for an angry protest, but found nothing more explicit than a cross "Oh, well!" and flung out of the room. Ben pulled a face, and stood, holding his cap, by the shut door.

"Come in! Come in!" Mr. Buffum called out from his chair by the fire.

Heavens, how hateful changes were! He seemed to see the man for the first time, and with blazing clearness the man's place in his life, as Ben carried forward a high-backed chair, planted it firmly down and sat slowly, stiffly on its edge.

He found it difficult to begin, very difficult.

"Got nothing better to do with your evening than upset that gal, I see," commented Ben pleasantly.

Mr. Buffum took no notice. Ben waited expectant, wondering whatever had caused the old Governor to send for him in this way: a thing he'd not done in all the years they had been together. "Summat's up, anyhow!" he had remarked to Mrs. Ben: and now sat curious as to what that summat was.

"I've just had wonderful good news," Mr. Buffum said suddenly. "Wonderful good news. My niece tells me Samuelson has taken Hurston Hall."

He stopped as suddenly as he had begun.

"Lor, lumme! You don't say! Draggin' me through the garden at this time o' night to tell me that! Why, I've known that days and weeks."

Ben leaned back and amiably hooted.

"Yes, but that's not all. My niece tells me what you could not possibly know, and that is—Samuelson's dead keen to have you as head gardener, and I'm dead keen that you should take the job on."

"Oh, you are, are you? That's good!" said Ben, and relapsed into himself, like a large turtle withdrawing.

"Listen to me! Men of our age are apt to get stuck, you know, in grooves. But this isn't a chance you must miss, Ben, for any foolish reasons. You might feel a little strange at first, but you would soon get used to the work and do it quite easily."

"Sure thing!" commented Ben. "Nothing *to* it. With all that money behind you!"

"Capital. You see, you'd have a real chance there to show what you're made of. It's absurd for a man like you to stay pottering about a little one-eyed place like this. You'd never get rid of me, of course. I'd always come creepin' round to tea with you and Mrs. Ben. My chair in the cottage, you know. And there you'd be—men under you—greenhouses, potting-sheds."

"Yes. That's a proper place, that is. Acres of glass. Why, the vegetable garden's bigger than all o' this 'ere. Wouldn't need to put yer hand to a spade no more. Ten men under yer and as much outside help as you wants and can get. And where we spend farthings on stuff they spend fivers. Don't you make any mistake!"

He leaned back, nodding sagaciously. Mr. Buffum carried on the wave of enthusiasm, clinching the matter.

"So when an offer is made you, as it most certainly will, you must accept it."

Ben spoke casually: "Oh, an offer's been made all right."

Mr. Buffum started as though his face had been slapped.

"Oh, has it?" he said. "You've kept it pretty close."

"I ain't a talkative chap," said Ben, staring at the mantelpiece, unhelpfully.

Mr. Buffum pulled himself together with a great effort. He must endeavour not to be a sentimental old idiot, he assured himself with a quick pang. After all, a fellow who could lose his temper vilely as he had lost it that very morning, and then go creeping round like a schoolboy to say he was sorry, did not deserve much consideration.

He waited hoping that Ben would tell him more: he hoped in vain. Ben sat inscrutably, immovably still. "That's all right," Mr. Buffum burst forth into the uncomfortable silence. "You do things your own way. That's your affair. But, my goodness! I am glad. What a swell you'll be. Don't you think you'll be able to shake me off, tho'. Not a bit of it. Not a bit of it. And don't you ever forget the good times we've had together. Pickin' apples and you climbin' any old tree like some great monkey. And that pine stump we grubbed up. Do you remember? That bottle of beer went down as well as any I've tasted. Didn't it? Pretty well reached Australia on that job before we could shift him. Good times. Good times. Very good times. But tell me all about it. Don't sit there like some old Mandarin nodding. Tell me."

Mr. Buffum sat back after this outburst, brooding on the aforementioned happy times.

"Sorry to disappoint you and all like that," said Ben at last with enormous quietness. "But I ain't goin' near no Samuelson."

"What's that?" he started up to ask.

"You ain't deaf, are yer, as well as silly?" Ben answered furiously. "I ain't goin' near no Samuelson."

"Why ever not? Isn't the offer good enough?"

"Too good, if it comes to that!"

"It's absurd, my dear fellow. Absurd. Why ever aren't you going? You have a good offer. You know you could do the job. It's the chance of a lifetime. Besides, you have others to consider besides yourself —Mrs. Ben . . ."

Mr. Buffum was violently interrupted. "Hark at me! Hark at me! Did ever you hear such a blinkin' old hypercrite? How often have you said to me—*Money ain't everythin', Ben. Believe me. Money ain't 'appiness, Ben* (he mimicked atrociously a genteel manner of speech)? Many and many and many's the time!"

"Nor is it, of course," Mr. Buffum answered angrily. "That's nothing to do with it. Why have you turned down this offer?"

"All right. All right. All right. No need to let your hair fly. I knows my own business." He stretched out a large brown hand and made the gesture of patting a small boy's head. "I happen not to like the bloke."

"Oh! But that's silly, Ben. Liking doesn't come into this affair. Why, you'll hardly see Samuelson from one week's end to another. Hardly as much as that."

"All right. All right. All right!" Ben repeated, with the same gesture. "I can run me own show! Thanks all the same and many of 'em. *And* I don't hang on where I'm not wanted. Oh, no! You needn't have no fears o' that. I've often thought I wouldn't mind doin' a bit o' market gardenin' and odd jobs on me own. Better life than dancin' attendance on a moody

chap who doesn't know his own mind from one minute to the next."

Mr. Buffum felt that the tables were being rather unpleasantly turned.

"I was only speaking for your good."

There was an unpleasant taunt in Ben's ruthless laugh as he said, "In yer mind!" which made Mr. Buffum feel murderous, and cold fury froze him as Ben added, jeering: "You gets the truth from me: the truth, every time, and you don't like it."

Mr. Buffum burst out furiously: "The truth, you old beast. The truth is that the garden won't be the same without you about in it. I can't imagine enjoying the garden again without you about in it—though why that is so, I'm blowed if I know."

There was a silence, which Ben's voice at length penetrated gently in a very different tone:

"Don't talk so silly: a garden's a garden whatever chap's about in it."

Mr. Buffum snapped out: "That's not a point I care to argue. I know what I feel. That's final."

Again silence descended upon them.

Then Ben growled: "A coupla fools."

"What's that?" Mr. Buffum rattled out.

Ben raised his voice near to an angry shout:

"A coupla fools, I says. Seems we're pretty much made of a piece. A coupla fools. The two of us."

"Oh, damn you, Ben. Damn you." Mr. Buffum weakly collapsed. "You ought to go to Samuelson's." And he could say no more. But when he found his voice again he managed with an effort to say: "I feel I'm getting in your way."

A kindly-voiced Ben reassured him:

"Of course you are, metty. Gettin' in me way. What else have you ever done? I could never learn yer. No sense, that is. But it comes to this. There's all sorts of fools in the world and you're the sort of fool a fool like me likes. Yes," he went on meditatively, "I'm a funny sort of chap in me likes and dislikes. There ain't no bounds to it."

"I don't know what to say to you, Ben."

"There's nothing to be said, metty, if it comes to that; not so far as I can see. We've both blowed off a bit!"

Niece Lucia's head appeared tentatively round the door. Neither man took any notice of her, which did not greatly appeal to her sense of fitness. So she closed the door and marched in, spoiling for any kind of fray. She looked from one to the other.

"Well?" she challenged.

A low voice came from Mr. Buffum's chair, in which its owner sat crumpled.

"Ben won't go to Samuelson's."

A snort came from Ben—who stiffened on his high-backed chair. Then he shook a sorrowful head.

"That old uncle of yours, Miss Lucia! I thought you might do something with 'im—more'n I could ever do, though that ain't much. But he fair beats the band. Straight, he does that. Whatever do you think is his latest?"

"I haven't a notion," said Lucia, leaping to the uptake.

"After all these years; you'd hardly believe it, but he wants to push me off on that Samuelson trash. 'Be the makin' of you, Ben,' he says. 'Be the makin' of you.'"

He shook his head like a doctor at a hopeless case.

"No 'eart. Got a bloomin' great stone stead of a 'eart. Still, there it is. He can't help 'isself."

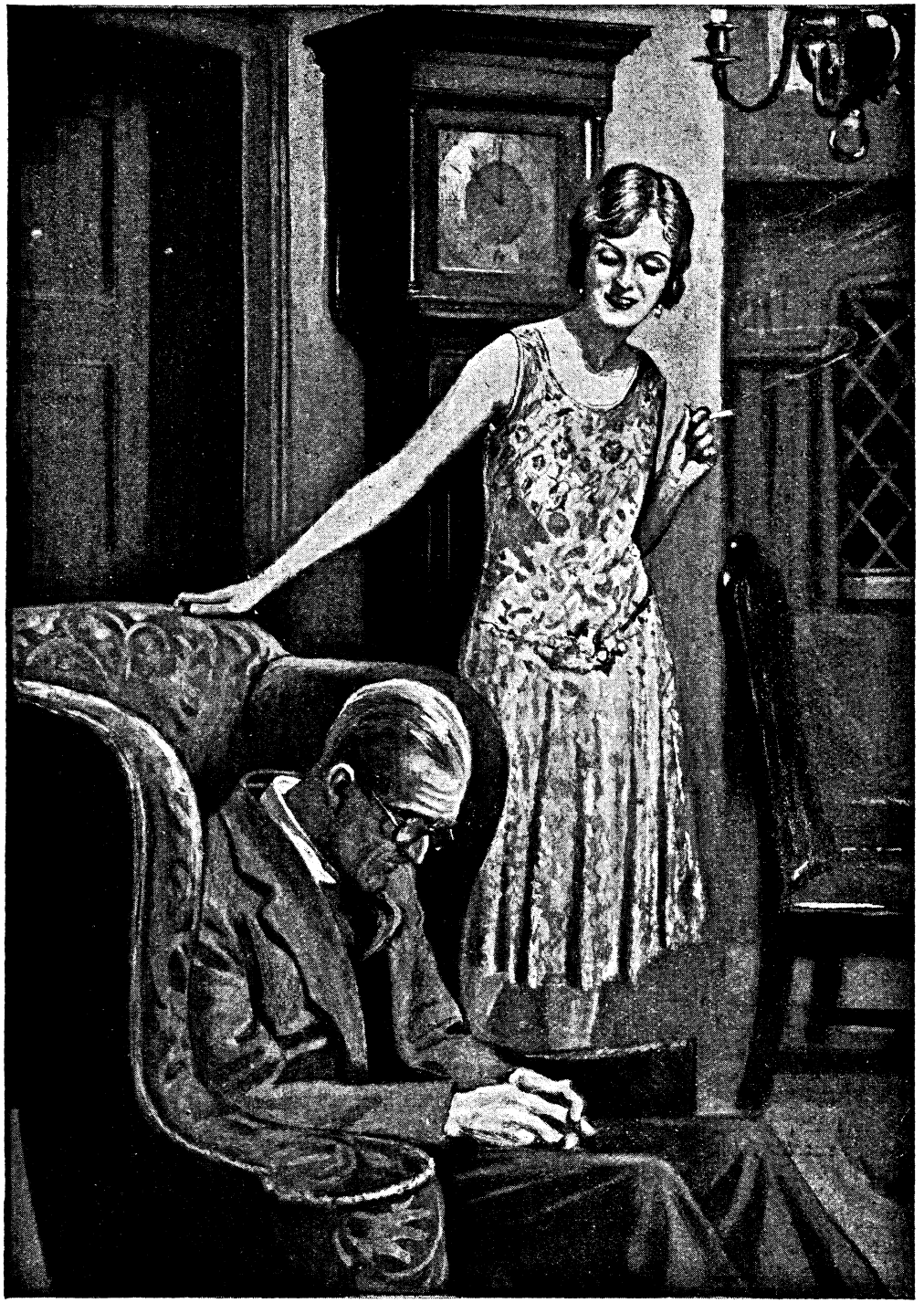
"Yes," Lucia agreed. "It's terrible to have a person like that for a near relation."

"And of course it's all as plain as day to you and me or any sensible creature—he wants to get rid o' me so as he can start playin' the fool all by 'isself in his old age without me to look after 'im. You look out, Miss Lucia; he'll be tryin' to do you in next. You mark my words. And him sitting there now without a word to say for 'isself, just as dumb ashamed of 'isself as a nipper caught pinchin' apples."

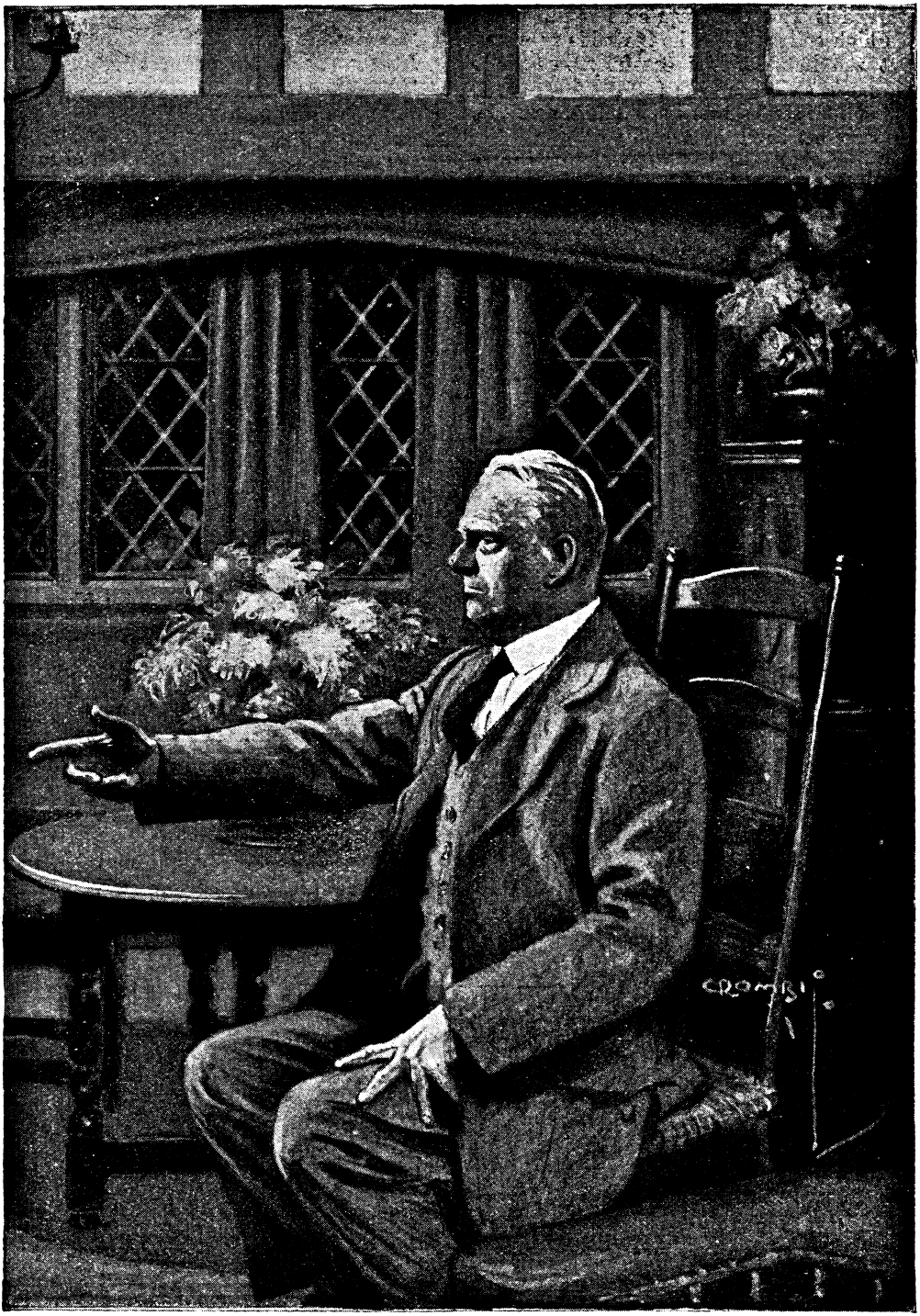
Over all Lucia's modern brightness came pouring a cloud of feeling. She stood there with a bright smile fixed on her face and something choking her throat which she failed to swallow down. There sat Ben stiffly upright on the edge of his chair, staunchly, unswervingly loyal to something rarely recognised, a man, sweet all through from head to toe. She must do something. What could she do? It was not suitable for a young lady to embrace a married gardener in the presence of an elderly relative, even though he happened to be in a state of momentary collapse. Oh, wasn't it? Her head tilted up. She took three quick, immediate steps forward, put warm arms round Ben's neck and kissed him again and again.

"You are an absolute darling. You are an absolute darling," she said. "So now you know."

Ben pulled out his handkerchief and



" Lucia stood there with a bright smile fixed on her face and something choking her throat which she failed to swallow down."



"There sat Ben stiffly upright on the edge of his chair, staunchly, unswervingly loyal to something rarely recognised, a man, sweet all through from head to toe."

worked it with elaborate care round under his high collar; then he blew his nose and put the handkerchief carefully back into his pocket.

Looking straight at Lucia, he announced, shaking his head, in a soft voice:

"Dash my buttons! The cheek of some kids. Shan't half have a tale to tell my missus when I gets home, what with the pair of you. But as a matter of fact that's the sort I—*can—do—with*!"

He beamed emphasis on the last three words.

Then he rose and lifted his high-backed chair.

"Best be gettin' along home before it's too late," he said. "What about Uncle? Not half mad. I lay. Jealous. Sitting there as droopy miserable as some old blackbird out in the rain."

"Oh, him!" laughed Lucia.

"Truth is he don't like bein' seen through: no, nor yet put into his place. Still, we does it for his good, don't we, Miss Lucia?"

"Indeed, we do."

By this time he had put the chair also back into *its* place. With his hand on the door-knob, not stopping, he called out, "Good night. Happy dreams and all like that!" and was gone.

"What's the matter, old man?" Lucia asked at length as Mr. Buffum remained motionless in his chair.

"You're not ill, are you?"

"No. I am not ill."

Niece was standing rather defiantly upright in front of him.

"So your little plan to fob him off was a failure."

She got no response.

"Feel a bit small, I should hope."

No response. She dug on.

"You don't say much. You *said* nothing to him."

Came a murmur: "No need to!"

"You might at least have offered him a drink."

"Perhaps I might."

Mr. Buffum was rising—rising not only from his chair. He stood up, and laid firm hands on Niece's shoulders. His voice was level and clear and low, as he said:

"You thanked him for me. You responded for me. I have never known a kiss more beautifully bestowed."

Niece found herself trembling. She pushed him away crossly. "Don't get goopy, old man." She spoke in a tight little fretful way. "For Heaven's sake, don't get goopy! And I don't *bestow* kisses like pennies in a blind beggar's tin."

But Mr. Buffum continued unabashed, impenetrably sure of himself:

"Its beauty lay in its warmth and spontaneity."

Niece Lucia would not succumb, tremble as she stupidly might.

"Stop it now. Stop it," she cried, and hurried half-way across the room when she turned to hurl her last missile sharpened with all her sauce. "Besides, you ought to be ashamed of yourself—encouraging a young girl to kiss your gardener. It's not done."

And she ran quickly from the room before she lost control of herself, leaving Uncle with a fatuous smile upon his happy face.

SLOW GROWTH.

DUMBLY a leafless elm looks down
On the young sloes' green tips
And marvels that the Spring so soon
Unseals their laughing lips.

Forgetting the uprush of sap
It takes to climb so high,
He grieves lest the strong life in him
His leafless boughs deny.

But, when the fierce midsummer heat
Palsies the quivering land,
Under what amplitude of shade
The little trees shall stand.

MADELEINE KENT.

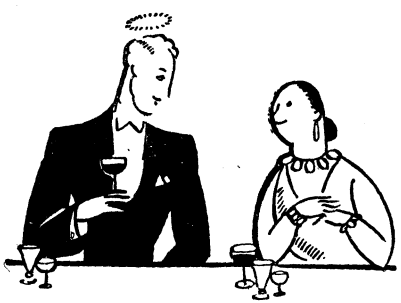
PEOPLE WE SHOULD LIKE TO MEET:

THE IDEAL GUEST

By GEORGE THOMAS

Illustrated by Peggy Earnshaw

ALWAYS early, never late,
He punctually comes at eight
When you've invited him to dine,
And doesn't wander in at nine.



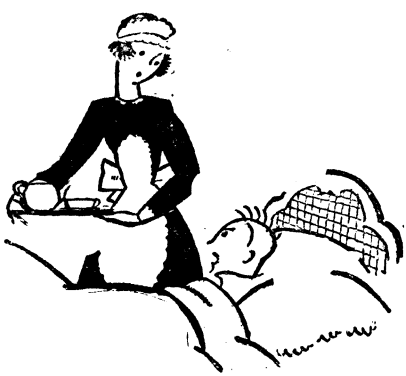
And when he comes, he doesn't say:
"Excuse me if I rush away,
I must get home," the while you know
He's off to Lady So-and-So.
He hasn't fads and much-felt wishes
For curious drinks and special dishes,
He eats the food you set before him.
His table partners never bore him.

His conversation never flags,
But doesn't pull your friends to rags.
He talks with entertaining brightness,
But doesn't overstep politeness.
If he has come along to dance,
He doesn't turn with haughty glance
And leave to blossom on the wall
Girls you've invited to your ball,
The while he gaily takes the floor
With someone you've not seen before,
Who, flushed with your wine and with elation,
Has gate-crashed at his instigation.



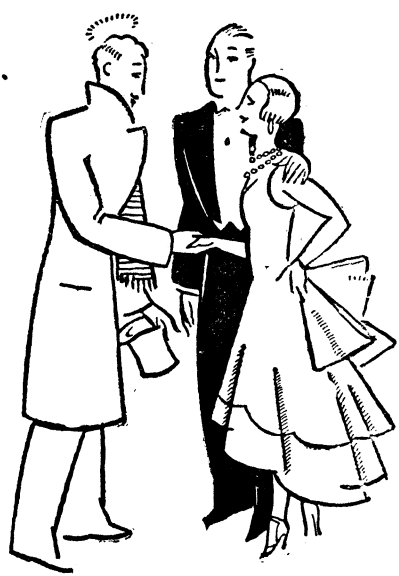


He doesn't make remarks aloud
About "this awful frumpish crowd,"
Nor, in a voice serene and bland,
Abuse the ices and the band.



And, if by any chance he smokes,
He takes due care of ladies' cloaks,
And doesn't throw stubs by the score
Down on your polished parquet floor.
Nor do you find a trail, next day,
Of wreckage where he went his way.

If he should stay a day or two,
He doesn't borrow things from you,
—An extra shirt, some shoes, a mack—
And then forget to send them back.
Nor is he rude to servants, who
Are doing all they need to do.
And when at last it's time to go,
He thanks you for a jolly show,
And doesn't murmur off-hand thanks
Just when his super-sports he cranks.
How nice this nice young man would be
Of whom hosts dream continually!



Our Great Public Schools

THEIR TRADITIONS, CUSTOMS & GAMES

By F. A. M. WEBSTER

RUGBY SCHOOL

"Rugby is notable not only for its success in scholarship, not only for its men of letters, but even more for its high ideals of honour and manliness and public spirit, and all those qualities that make our Public Schools the finest places of education in the world. These ideals and these qualities, strenuously taught by her great leaders and handed on as a cherished tradition from generation to generation of her sons, have left the mark of Rugby deep, not only throughout these islands, but throughout the Empire and in every part of the world."

King Edward VII's Address to Rugby School, July 3rd, 1909.

TO have given the world the best winter game; Dr. Arnold, one of the greatest headmasters of all time; and, in *Tom Brown's School Days*, the absolute classic of the most important transition period of English Public Schools history, would surely be considered glory enough by most schools, but the distinctions of Rugby are far more numerous than those mentioned.

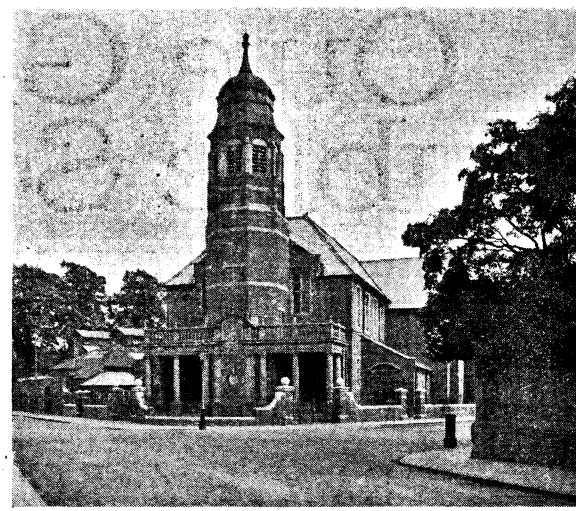
How widely spread is the reading of *Tom Brown's School Days* may be judged by the anecdote of the American visitor to Rugby, who, at the end of his tour of inspection, said to his cicerone, "Say, I wish before I leave you'd just show me that fireplace where you roast your fags."

In the cases of Winchester, Eton and Harrow, the histories of the founders are well defined, and we have even clear pictures of their appearance and mentality. But such is not the case when we come to consider Lawrence Sheriff, who gave us Rugby. The exact date of his birth is not known, but it must have been fairly early in the reign of Henry VIII. There is some suggestion that he was born at Brownsover, indeed a picture of the birthplace is extant, but others hold that he was a native of Rugby. How he spelt his name is also a matter of speculation, for he had as many notions of signing as had Shakespeare. Foxe, in his *Book of Martyrs*, refers to him as Lawrence Shiriffe, but in 1562, in the Inventory of royal gifts made to and given by Queen Elizabeth on New Year's Day, we find that "Laurence Shref" presented to the Queen a sugar loaf, a box of ginger, a box of nutmegs and a pound of cinnamon; and received from her, as a special mark of royal favour, "one gild salt with cover, 7 oz."

All very appropriate, for he had been a great champion of the Princess in the days when she was Heir Apparent; and, moreover, he had but lately become

Purveyor of Spices to the Royal Household.

Perhaps this appointment had something to do with the choosing of his armorial bearings, which are now used by Rugby School. These were granted by the College of Heralds at the special instance of the Queen and incorporate part of the arms of the Grocers' Company, of which Sheriff was made a freeman in 1541. The crest is "a lion's paw, erased, or, holding a bunch of dates, the fruit of the first in the pods argent, the stalkes and leaves proper." The dates are believed to perpetuate a joke of Elizabeth's at the expense of, or in compliment to, Sheriff's trade.



[*Frith, Reigate.*

TEMPLE SPEECH ROOM.

Sheriff, then, was born at Brownsover or Rugby, probably between 1510 and 1515, and went to London in his early "teens." There he amassed a considerable fortune as a grocer and purveyor of spices, enjoyed royal patronage throughout Elizabeth's reign, but only escaped the fires of Smithfield by the demise of Queen Mary. He, himself, died in September 1567, according to the Parish Register of Christ Church, Newgate Street, London.

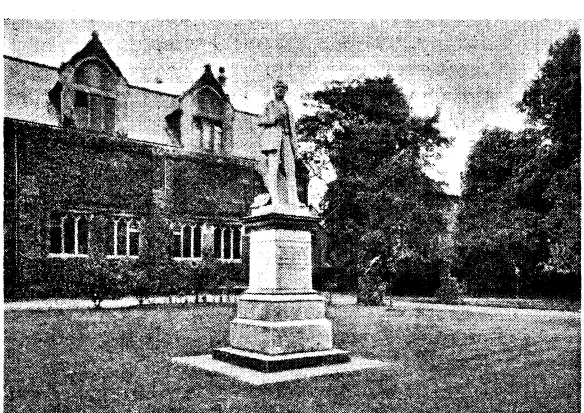
It was in the last year of his life that he founded Rugby School. His first intention was to leave his farm and parsonage at Brownsover and all his "mansyon house" at Rugby, £50 for building and £100 for additional land whereon to build and maintain "a fair and convenient School-House" and four almshouses.

Fortunately, he seems to have seen far into the future at the last, for on August 31st, 1567, he added a codicil to his will increasing the bequest by one-third of his estate in Middlesex. That third was worth £8 a year at the time, but to-day produces nearly as many thousands.

Rugby has no history during its first hundred years, and the little School House which, for twice that time, stood opposite the Parish Church, disappeared entirely soon after the Trustees in 1748 acquired the old Manor House at the top of High Street.

There is in existence a roll of headmasters from 1602 onwards, and in 1674 Robert Ashbridge, M.A., instituted a Register of Admissions, in which is entered the name of "Henricus de sacra Quercu"—Henry Holyoake—the son of an Oxford Fellow whom Charles I had honoured for raising and commanding a troop of Royalist horse among the undergraduates whilst the royal head-quarters were at Oxford.

The younger Holyoake became headmaster of Rugby in 1687, and is especially mentioned because he was the first person to attract the scions of noble houses to the School. Not only did he obtain as pupils the Cravens and Fieldings of the neighbourhood, he also drew scholars from the Cecils, Grevilles, Greys and Mordaunts of other counties, and there are records also of pupils in his time from Cheshire, Cumberland, Hunt-



[*Frith, Reigate.*

STATUE OF TOM HUGHES.

ingdon, Lincoln, London, Middlesex, Pembrokeshire, and even Switzerland.

He was himself the friend of Addison, who had a country seat at Bilton Hall, and produced one famous pupil in Cave, who founded and carried on *The Gentleman's Magazine.*

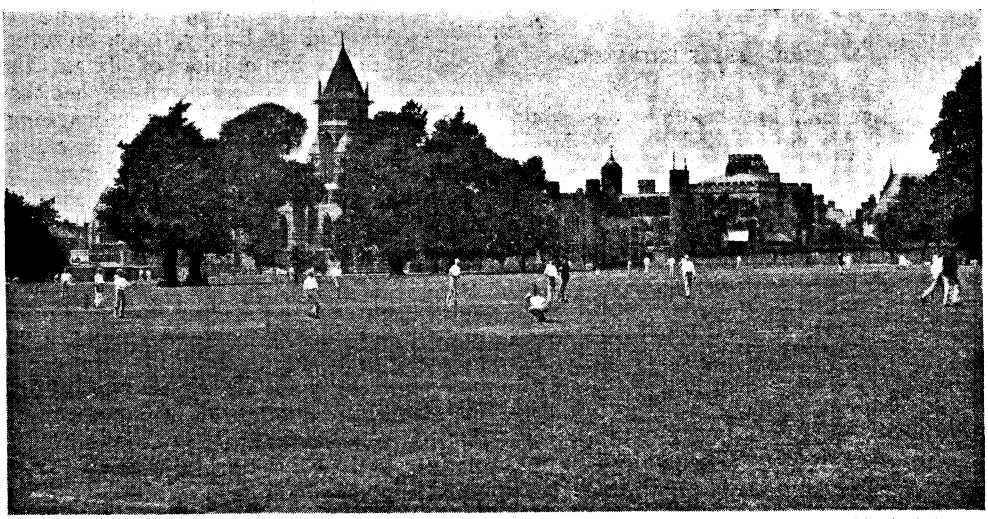
One feels that Henry Holyoake must have been of a persuasive personality, for neither the old "mansyon house" of Lawrence Sheriff, with its timber school attached, nor the playground in the graveyard, can have furnished fitting accommodation for his aristocratic "new boys."

In the first place there was to be appointed an "honest, discreet and learned man to teach grammar and generally preside over the Free School of Lawrence Sheriffe, of London, Grocer, to serve chiefly for the children of Rugby and Brownsover," His salary was fixed at £12 per annum, with free lodging.

Seven years passed before the building operations were completed and a headmaster appointed. The first master was succeeded in 1580 by Robert Seale, who was soon forcibly removed from his office. Various law actions followed, but the centenary of the school was happily celebrated by the Lord Keeper declaring against the litigants who had striven to divert the benefits of the Founder's bequests.

During this period headmasters came and went with amazing frequency until Knightley Harrison, the first Old Rugbeian to become headmaster, was appointed in 1670. After seventeen years he was succeeded by Henry Holyoake, who held the post until 1731, by far the longest and most notable headmastership up to the nineteenth century. In Holyoake's days the average number of boys receiving instruction each year appears to approximate just short of one hundred.

After the move to the Manor House in 1748 the School remained in its new home until 1816, in which year the present buildings of Old Quad were finished. William Knail was the headmaster who brought about the move to the Manor House. In his fifth year Ralph Abercrombie, who was to win fame as a soldier at Aboukir and Alexandria, entered the School.

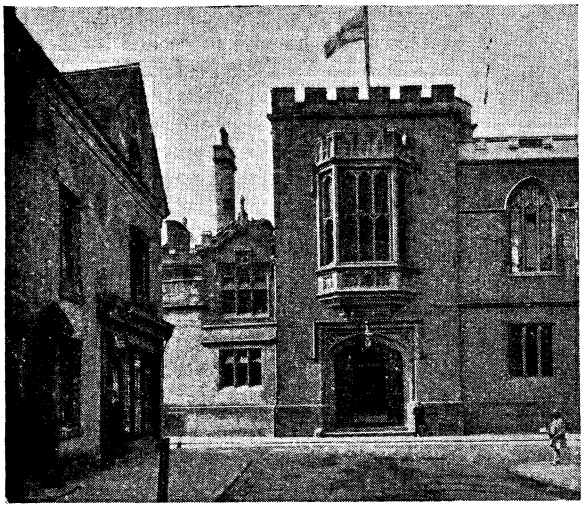


[*Frith, Reigate.*

THE CLOSE.

While speaking of famous "O.R." soldiers one might pause to mention one of a much later date, since his stern determination typified the spirit of the School; I refer to Major Hodson, of Hodson's Horse, a wild spirit both at School and during the Indian Mutiny. He it was who, in one of the dimly lit rooms of Humayun's Tomb, outside Delhi, took prisoner Bahadur Shah, the last Moghul Emperor. There is nothing more dramatic in history than the yielding up by the last Moghul to Hodson of the sword with which the first Moghul, Humayun, had carved his way to Empire.

Bahadur Shah's life was spared; but Hodson, with his own hand, executed the Moghul's sons and nephews. For this act he would have been recalled to stand his



[*Frith, Reigate.*

HIGH STREET ENTRANCE.

trial in England, but before orders could reach him this gallant and greatly daring officer had fallen mortally wounded at the storming of Begam Kothi, now the Post Office at Lucknow. Legend has it that this Major Hodson was the original of "East," in *Tom Brown's School Days.*

Rugby, too, has had her poets. They have their corner in the Chapel, with three spaces for medallions. Two are filled with reliefs of Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough, but delicacy has forbidden a medallion to W. S. Landor, who was forcibly expelled from the School. The last, and by no means the least Rugby poet, the late Rupert Brooke, who laid down his life for his land, has a tablet of his own.

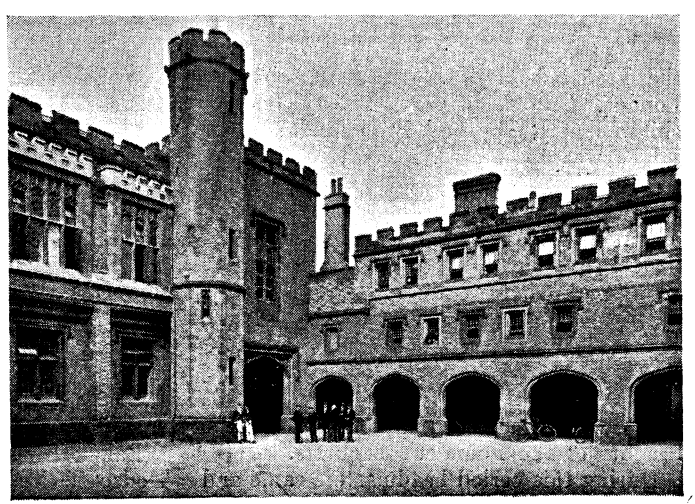
The next great headmaster after Knail was "James the First." Thomas James, who was appointed in the year 1778. He was educated at Eton and Kings and is perhaps best remembered for having instituted the Time Table, which has survived with but few alterations, and the system of three regular half-holidays a week, to which subsequent headmasters have, if anything, added their tittle. For example, there is "Middle Week" custom, whereby every third Monday is a half-holiday, in substitution for the former weekly remission of Third Lesson on Saturdays.

But if James the First was a benefactor in the matter of holidays, the misguided and the misunderstood remember him also as the inventor of "Imposition Paper," upon which alone may be written the "tag," or task, for which a boy has been "floored," or found wanting. Imposition Paper is issued only by House Masters and must be signed by a member of the Sixth as having been prepared before Lock Up.

The culprit, working against time in his den, as a study is termed at Rugby, may, however, revise his opinion of James the First when he remembers that that kindly head first legalised the study system, which gives a boy a privacy which he shares with no more than one companion.

As the Sixth have been mentioned, it may be added that it was not until the days of Dr. Arnold that the Sixth exchanged the licence allowed them for the trusted mentorship which Arnold left as a legacy, not only to Rugby but to every other school in Great Britain.

In the days of Thomas James's headmastership poaching, the breaking of bounds, and revels which went near to drunken orgies, were by no means unknown; but, in addition to wielding a wise and, if necessary, drastic control, he gave his assistant



[*Frith, Reigate.*

OLD QUAD.

masters power to use the rod, with certain circumscriptions.

His successor, Henry Ingles, has been held unfortunate. It was in his days that Rugby staged its Great Rebellion. In 1797 the " Black Tiger," as Ingles was nicknamed, had so incensed his scholars that a certain Astley expressed his displeasure by means of gunpowder and pellets directed at a house-master's window. The flogging he received left him " sappy " in person and spirit; other boys sympathised, and the headmaster's door was blown down, most of the school windows were smashed, and the major portion of Dr. Ingles's library was pitched on to a blazing bonfire.

Dr. Ingles took to his study but surreptitiously summoned the aid of soldiers and a number of horse-drovers who were in the town. The military contented themselves by guarding with fixed bayonets the study where Ingles had remained, but the horse-copers, with their long whips, drove the rebels to seek refuge in the Island, which was then really surrounded with water. A Justice of the Peace was summoned and the Riot Act read, which must surely have been an unprecedented happening in connection with school life. Finally the soldiers waded to the Island and the boys, faced with cold steel, had no alternative but that of unconditional surrender.

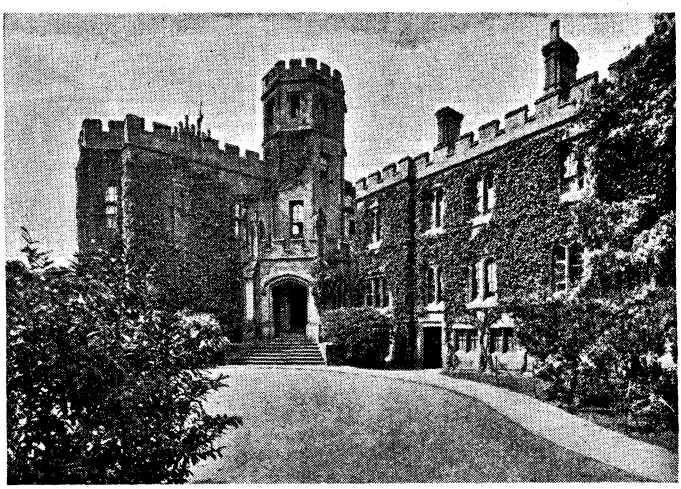
Subsequently the Black Tiger enhanced his reputation as a first-class flogger.

Curiously enough, another military episode is associated with his career, for seven years after the rebellion he was to see other troops drilling in the Close, when two companies of Volunteer Riflemen were found by the School as part of the national preparations to meet the threatened French invasion.

The next headmaster might have been Samuel Butler, but Thomas Wooll obtained the appointment, and so Butler went to do fine work at Shrewsbury. Lord Lyttelton's epigram, " Much Cry, little Wooll," refers to the flogging tendencies of one who has been styled a " kindly gentleman and a good scholar and teacher, but a choleric, as well as an exceedingly vigorous, little Hercules in black tights." He came from Winchester in the faith, it is said, that " the *argumentum bacculinum* is a necessary supplement to ' manners ' in the making of men."

For the rest, he did great work in the provision of adequate housing for the School and its gradual transference to fresh quarters. If his hand was heavy it must be remembered that in his time there was very little discipline or supervision of the boys' lives, with inevitable results, such as the keeping of dogs and guns and even of private cellars.

Wooll, when he resigned the headmastership in 1828, left behind him a great memorial in the buildings and the Chapel and School House he had raised; but the years from 1828 to 1842 are the important ones, not only in the history of Rugby but throughout the Public School life of the whole land.



[*Frith, Reigate.*

HEADMASTER'S HOUSE.

Thomas Arnold, who also came from Winchester, was under thirty years of age when he succeeded to the office and installed himself in his famous kitchen chair at his equally famous kitchen table, both of which may now be seen in Rugby School Museum.

" I should like to try whether my notions of Christian education are practicable " were words written by Arnold a year earlier than his appointment to Rugby; but before he had been a year in office he admitted that " a low standard of morals must be tolerated amongst them, as it was in the boyhood of the human race. I hope to make Christian men, Christian boys I can scarcely hope to make."

Rugby School had long since acquired a reputation as one of the great Public Schools of England, but Dr. Arnold was to make it greater still and his task was to be no sinecure.

For a true picture of those days it is impossible to serve the reader better than by recommending the re-perusal of *Tom Brown's School Days*, which can be obtained at any price and must have been translated into almost every language under the sun. His Honour the late Judge Hughes wrote that classic, and his statue stands in front of Temple Reading Room and Museum.

In part, but not entirely, his character of Tom Brown was taken from his own life. For example, there is the instance of the great fight between Tom Brown and Slogger Williams. In this case, at least, Tom Hughes was not the original of Tom Brown. The real protagonists in that affair were boys named Orlebar and Owen Jones. This is well authenticated by an anecdote in Mr. W. Eadon's excellent little *Guide to Rugby School*, wherein he relates that when Dr. Temple unveiled the statue to Judge Hughes in 1899 a meeting took place between two old clergymen in School House Garden.

"When were you at Rugby?" asked the one.

"I was here in the thirties under Arnold," came the reply.

"So was I. What House were you in?"

"School House. And you?"

"I was in School House. We must have been here together. What's your name?"

"Bulkeley Owen Jones."

"Mine's Orlebar."

In this fashion and after many years "Tom Brown" and "Slogger Williams" met once more, at the unveiling of the statue of the man who has immortalised their battle.

It is interesting to note that another member of the family—Squadron-Leader Orlebar of Schneider Cup fame—is also an O.R.

Apart from *Tom Brown's School Days*, Judge Hughes, in other places, had many good tales to tell of Rugby under Arnold. The new headmaster, he tells us, dealt firmly but tactfully with the sporting proclivities of his pupils. Guns and dogs were suppressed by the simple expedient of threatening to put out of bounds any "spending house," i.e. tuck-shop, which should be found to be accommodating Rugbeians by the custody of forbidden things or beasts.

The "horsey" section of the boys took, however, much longer to deal with. Rugby lies in famous hunting country, and there were many ways in which a boy could raise a mount. Matters came to a head through a boastful youngster becoming involved in a couple of races, in both of which he was beaten by a less assuming but better brother schoolboy jockey, named Uvedale Corbett, afterwards a well-known Cheshire squire. That match led to plans being made for a first-rate steeplechase, since the Doctor had taken no notice of the first essay.

The second affair suggested a much more flagrant flouting of authority, and the night before the race was to be ridden Dr. Arnold sent for Corbett.

"Corbett," said the Doctor, "I know all about the match you rode the other day. If I had taken any public notice of it I must have expelled you both publicly. This would probably have ruined your career at Oxford, where you have just matriculated, and, I hope, will do well. But I have written to your father to tell him of your flagrant breach of discipline. And now let me warn you and your friends, I know what you are intending, and I will expel every boy who rides, or is present, and will have the roads watched to get the names."

That race did not come off, or any other in Arnold's time.

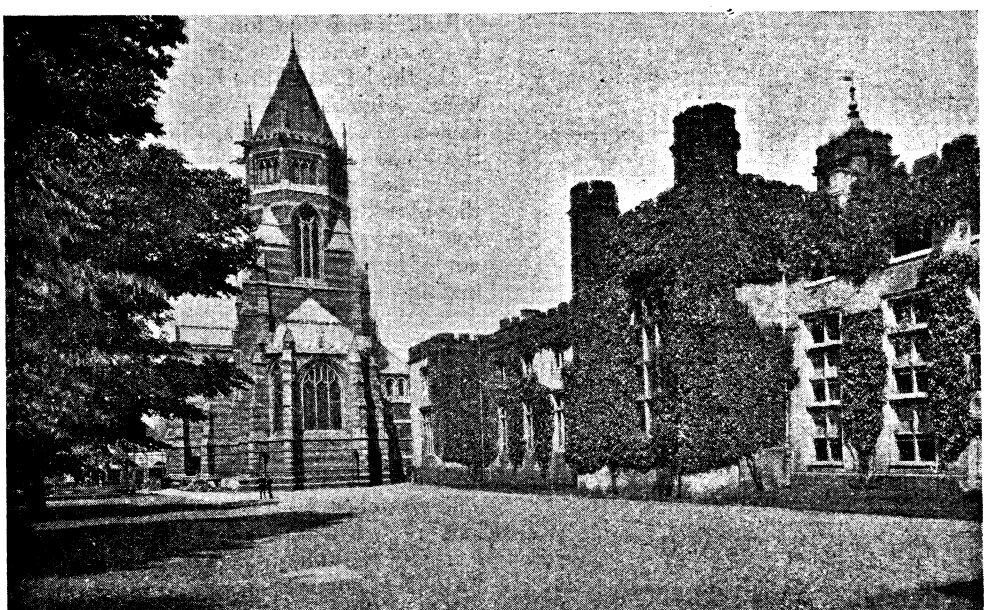
He had further trouble, however, over fishing, when some boys ducked Mr. Boughton Leigh's watchers and keepers. These, with their master, came to School to identify the culprits, and Arnold's power of ruling was put to a severe test, for the whole School was against him; and the præpostors of the week, four Sixth Form fellows, instead of keeping order, walked up and down the room hissing "S-s-s-s-s-ilen-s-s-se!" None the less, five of the half-dozen offenders were identified and expelled. Oswell, handsomest and most renowned of Rugby athletes, and later a famous explorer, alone escaped detection and stayed on for a further two years to perform the almost incredible feat of throwing a cricket ball from Little Side ground over the elm trees into the Schoolhouse garden. The feat might have become legendary, but there is written proof that Judge Hughes witnessed its achievement.

In the space of this article it is impossible to give even an adequate outline of Arnold's great headmastership of Rugby. Among many outstanding circumstances are his promotion of all Sixth Form boys to præpostorships. He gave them great powers, left

the discipline of the School largely in their hands and, in return, looked for support, information and assistance from them when trouble arose.

It created a difficult position with boys who, after all, were not masters, and the tradition arose that the Sixth might beat and otherwise punish but must not "blab."

One great abuse which he reformed was that of single combat in secluded places. Up to 1834 casual disputes were settled in the Close, and more serious affairs decided in a field out of bounds, generally near Butlin's Mound; but in that year a small



[*Frith, Reigate.*

CHAPEL AND SCHOOL HOUSE.

but loyal "regular" of Sixth and Fifth Form sitting-room had contested the right of a bulky "specialist" to entry, but had been half killed for his pains. The Doctor learned of the whole business and, after that, ordained that all battles must be fought in the Close, under penalty of expulsion. That put an end to dangerous fights, for the Doctor's study window overlooked the Close, through which, in addition, masters and præpostors were continually passing.

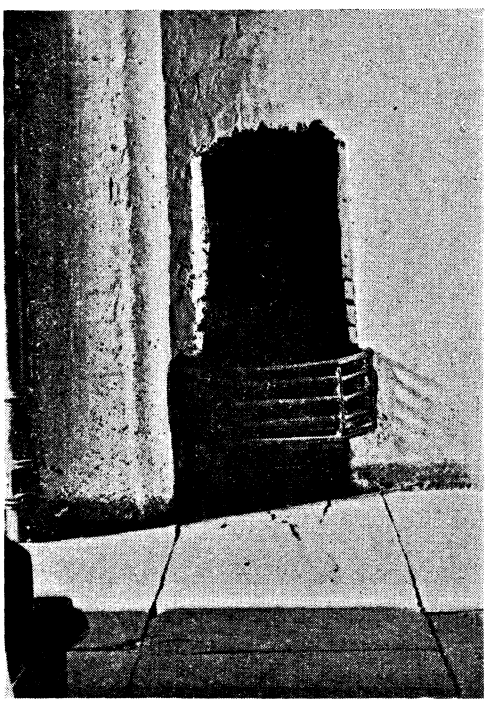
Among famous men who were boys under Arnold's rule were Tom Hughes himself; Conington, who, as a new boy, was discovered reciting the *Æneid* to a number of his companions, who sat, book in hand, striving, but without success, to catch him out; E. H. Bradby and Dean Bradley, destined for the headmasterships of Haileybury and Marlborough; Ministers, such as Lord Derby and W. H. Waddington, the French Premier of 1878, who, as Ambassador to the Court of St. James, did so much to help Baron Pierre de Coubertin when he came to England, and incidentally visited Rugby to study English sport, prior to his reinstitution of the Olympic Games; Lord Cross, and Sir Richard Temple of Bengal fame.

What such Rugbeians as these felt when their beloved headmaster died has been better described in *Tom Brown's School Days* than any less intimate pen than that of Judge Hughes could possibly tell.

To succeed such a genius was no small matter, and the reigns of Archibald Campbell Tait and Dr. Goulbourn are remembered as times of peaceful expansion. During Dr. Tait's headmastership many Old Rugbeians fell gloriously in the Crimean War. He increased the numbers of the School, that Dr. Arnold had kept down to 280 non-foundationers, to over 300. Then came Dr. Goulbourn, followed by Dr. Temple; the latter introduced a system of super-annuation amongst the boys, but, perhaps most important of all, he sent Butler to found Haileybury, Benson to aid the Prince Consort

in his plans for Wellington College, Percival to make Clifton; Potts to carry English scholastic traditions to Fettes in Scotland, Phillpotts to widen the scope of the great Harpur Trust School at Bedford, which has since almost outrivalled Rugby in both football and athletic traditions, and Kitchener to found the success of Newcastle High School.

The value of the work done by Dr. Temple is enshrined in the report of the Public Schools Commission, which found "that the general teaching of *literæ humaniores* was absolutely unsurpassed; that Rugby



[*Clare Speight, Rugby.*

THE OLD FIREPLACE.

School was the only one among those within their purview in which physical science was a regular part of the curriculum."

He stayed long enough to see Rugby through its Tercentenary, and was succeeded by Dr. Hayman, who in turn gave place to Dr. Jex-Blake, an Old Rugbeian who had won the Crick Run in 1850 and who, among many other benefits conferred upon the School, presented "Tosh," as the swimming bath is known in Rugby parlance.

Of successive headmasters the time has not yet come to write.

The School is, of course, fragrant with memories of Tom Brown. As one enters Old Quad there, straight in front, are the great iron-studded gates through which he was chaired by his comrades after he had captained the School against M.C.C. on the last of his days at Rugby. In the dining-hall is the fireplace at which Tom tells us the fags were roasted. From the dining-room opens the "long passage," but the end fireplace, which alone heated the studies in his days, is gone. The end study itself has, however, a special interest, since in it Tom spent his last few terms, while the third study from the end, according to legend, is the one in which Tom and "East" barricaded themselves, when "Flashman," who was no Sixth Form "buck" and therefore had not the right to do so, wished to "fag" them.

On the left are some big oak slabs, which were, originally, the tops of dining-hall tables. They are of special interest, like the Fourth Form panelling at Harrow, for the names carved upon them, among others that of HUGHES. Overhead there are numerous "streets," along which Rugbeians, but not visitors, would have no difficulty in finding their way to the dormitories. No. 4 dormitory is the one in which little "Arthur" was slippered for kneeling to say his prayers.

Back in Quad one's eyes are drawn to the old clock in the Tower, for memory recalls that Tom and East, by means of nails driven into the masonry, climbed up and scratched their names on the minute hand; and if this be doubted the hand can still be seen in the museum, with "Hughes" faintly inscribed upon it. A recess in the eastern wall of old Big School still houses the pump to which past generations of boys came forth to perform their morning ablutions. Sixth Form room is perched above the main gateway looking towards High Street. It has the Headmaster's Window, with a photograph or shield to commemorate every headmaster right back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Even more interesting are the slabs affixed to the walls, for they are the tops of tables at which boys once worked who have since become famous, as the deeply cut names testify.

By means of a winding stairway and the Quad, Old Big School is reached, where all great occasions were celebrated in Tom Brown's time, and where Macready, the actor and friend of Charles Dickens, first tried his Thespian powers. Here, too, the names of Rugby's exhibitioners, starting

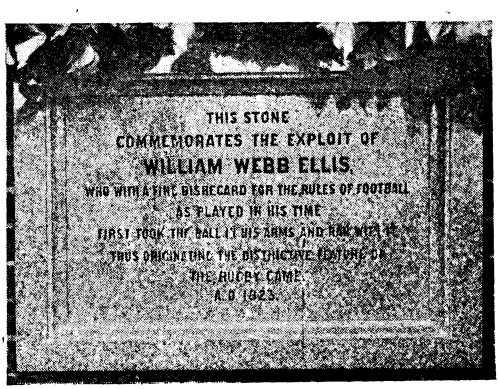
with Vaughan, father of the present headmaster, are empanelled.

Then there is New Quad, the site of private property until early in the late sixties, where Sally Harrowell, in her cottage, " baked such stunning murphies " according to East's information to Tom Brown.

Buildings, however, are but bricks and mortar to many people; the Close is for evermore tenanted by the ghosts of great sportsmen dead and gone. Hughes has made these playing-fields famous, but the " three trees " are gone and many another mighty elm beneath which Dr. Arnold and Tom Hughes talked, all fallen in the great Sunday afternoon gale of March, 1895. Men remember that it was here that William Webb Ellis founded the Rugby Football code, and " Plum " Warner learned to wield a bat; but how many, I wonder, are aware that it was here also that there wandered as a boy F. C. Selous, greatest of all African big-game hunters and no less a literary celebrity than Tom Brown, for was not Selous the famous original of Sir Rider Haggard's *Alan Quartermain*? I remember him so well, for although over sixty years of age when the Great War came, he insisted on joining up with the Legion of Frontiersmen and fell by a German bullet in the East African campaign.

The Island where Dr. Ingles's rebels made their last stand still survives, a lonely reminder of the ancient British occupation of Rugby, when the Romans marched down Watling Street; but the drawbridge which the rebels raised has vanished, and the moat they could not defend has been filled in since 1847.

The " Doctor's Wall," of course, contains the tablet recording the School's undisputed claim to having founded Rugby Football:





[*Clare Speight, Rugby.*

DR. ARNOLD'S TABLE AND CHAIR.

Thus reads the inscription. Prior to Ellis's exploit a player catching the ball from an opponent's kick before it touched the ground was entitled to step back as far as he liked and punt or drop kick the ball himself or place it for another of his sidesmen to kick. Ellis established the tradition of running with the ball, but the new feature was not officially recognised in the School's rules until the captaincy of Judge Hughes in 1841, and then only with certain limitations.

Webb Ellis, incidentally, played for Oxford in the first cricket match against Cambridge. He became, afterwards, Minister of St. George's, Albemarle Street, and Rector of Magdalen Laver, in Essex, until his death in 1872.

One of the first great exponents of running with the ball was James Mackie, afterwards M.P. for Kirkcudbrightshire, a notable player and athlete at Oxford before the days of Inter-University Rugby matches or athletic sports.

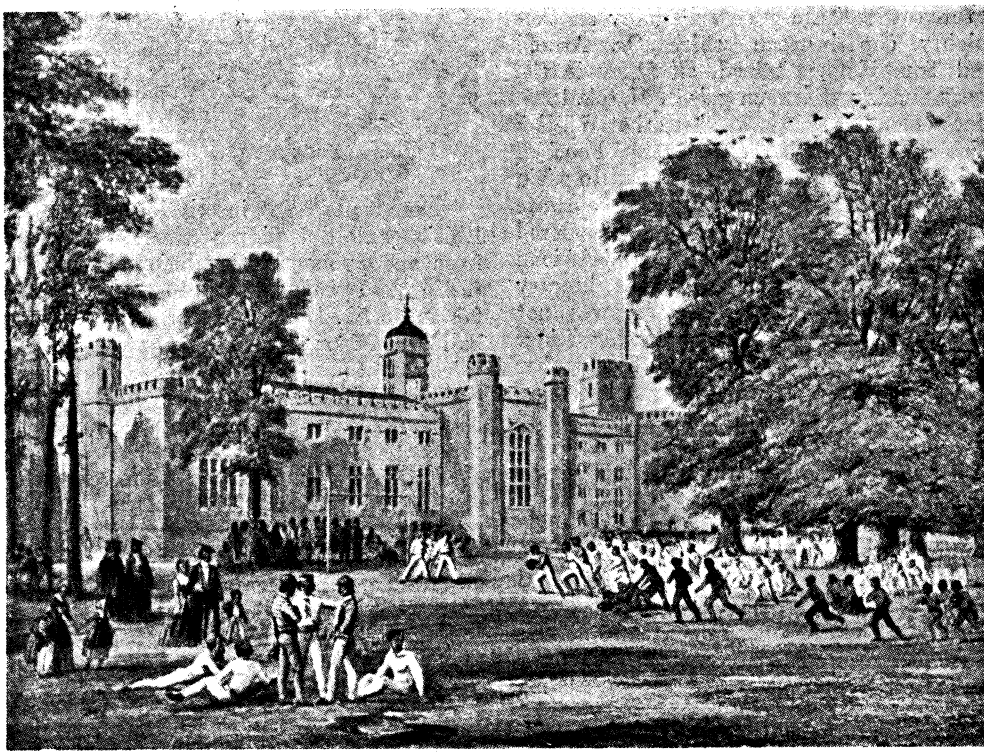
Contemporaneous as players at Rugby with Tom Hughes were Dean Bradley, Matthew and Thomas Arnold, Sir Charles Arbuthnot, Theodore Walrond and Judge Franklin Lushington.

In those days there were no " foreign " matches; a game could not be won unless a goal was scored, and long afternoons were spent in indecisive struggles in which a hundred players a side strove rewardlessly for the victory. Hacking flourished and was practised both in the scrums and when a boy was running with the ball, the great feat being to jump over all the " hacks " that were aimed at one's shins or ankles.

The principal games played were School *v.* School House, and Sixth *v.* School. In 1842 the former match lasted four days!

The first foreign match was played on November 26th, 1867, against a team of Old Rugbeians captained by Mr. A. C. Harrison of Dunchurch Hall. Colours were first awarded in 1870 to the best twenty players; but the number was reduced to fifteen six years later, when the Captain of the Oxford team brought down no more than fifteen men and refused to play the schoolmasters and introduced their own sport to "foreign" institutions.

Among famous Rugby sportsmen of the late sixties and early seventies must certainly be numbered the Hon. M. J. Brooks and W. Sapt. They were together at Oakfield Preparatory School, and on leaving their "other place" (the Rugby term for one's Preparatory School) proceeded to Rugby. M. J. Brooks played a good deal of football and subsequently "shoved in the scrum" both for Oxford against Cambridge and for



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RUGBY AT RUGBY (1852).

The Rugby game is believed to have originated in 1823, when William Webb Ellis defied the rules of football, as then played, by picking up the ball and running with it.

match unless Rugby would consent to field only a like number. The new number became stabilised for the School team very quickly, but it was not until 1888 that the Houses reduced their sides to a like number. Hacking survived until the end of the seventies, although it had died out earlier elsewhere.

From Rugby the cult of the game spread quickly, through Old Rugbeians going up to the Universities or into occupations in London, or who took appointments as England against Scotland; but it is as an athlete that his name is best remembered. As a boy he spent hours, either alone or with his brother, leaping backwards and forwards across Clifton Brook. He is, also, one of the very few fellows who have mastered Butler's Leap, comprising a stout fence, 15 feet of water and a drop of 12 feet from an approach no wider than the width of the narrow road. He would take a high hedge or a six-barred gate without a falter. Mr. Sapt has told me that it was not until

the gymnasium was built that M. J. Brooks approached the zenith of his jumping fame. That was in 1873, in which year he won the School high jump at 5 ft. 3 in. and the long jump at 20 ft. 3 in. Honours fell thick and fast upon him at Oxford; for in 1874, as a nineteen-year-old Freshman, he broke the world's high jump record against Cambridge at 5 ft. 10 in., to which he added an inch a week later when he took the English Championship. At 21 years of age he won the two Oxford events at 6 ft. ½ in. and 21 ft. 11 in.; against Cambridge he cleared 6 ft. 2½ in., which still stands as the unequalled Inter-University record, besides taking the long jump at 21 ft. 8½ in. and winning the English title a few days later in torrents of rain and from a soft take off at 6 feet.

Mr. Sapt enjoys the peculiar distinction of having introduced both football and athletics into Germany, whither he went in 1873 with G. C. H. Brown, an Old Etonian, to study German at Dresden.

The Dresden F.C. was the first Sports Club of its kind to be founded in Germany and originally recruited its members from the English and American colony, with a few Frenchmen and Russians, such as Prince Nicholas Tzoubetscoy, a great athlete, thrown in. The Germans were at first scornful and dubbed the sport and football ground "Apen-Theater," or Monkey Theatre; but, all the same, they owe their present great athletic position to the originality of an Old Rugbeian, who first showed them how English sport is followed.

Athletics proper have always been popular at Rugby, and one must not pass without mention of Kenneth Powell, the last of the great school of bent-legged hurdlers. In 1907 he set the Oxford and Cambridge 120 yards hurdles record at 15⅗ sec. He fell on active service with the Honourable Artillery Company in Flanders in the early days of the War.

But if what we term Sports have been popular at the great School, cross-country running has enjoyed an even greater vogue. Here, indeed, the world owes yet another debt to Rugby, for the late Mr. Walter Rye, not long before he died in 1929, known and beloved of all athletic people as "The Father of Paper-chasing," told me that when he instituted the first cross-country run for members of the Thames Rowing Club in 1867, he drew his inspiration from the description of the Barby Hill Run in



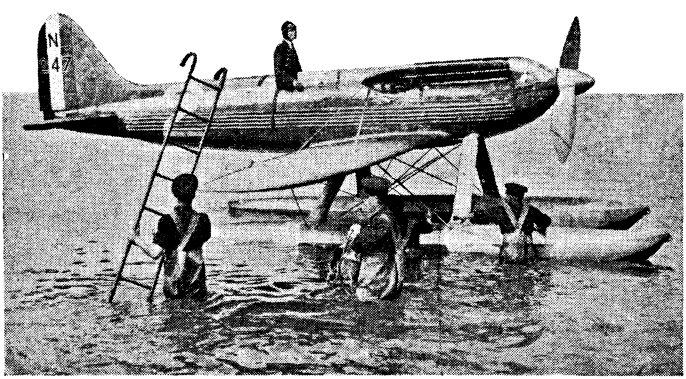
[*Sport & General.*

RUGBY CENTENARY MATCH AT RUGBY SCHOOL.
England and Wales *v.* Scotland and Ireland.

Tom Brown's School Days. Equally interesting is the fact that when the second "Thames" handicap was held, the chief judge was no other than Tom Hughes himself.

Among the runners were two old Rugbeians who had held records for the Crick and Barby Hill runs, and the late Lord Alverstone, who finished second, beaten by a bare yard, and an old Etonian, named Hawtry, who was fourth.

It is not, however, "Barby Hill," but "Crick" which is the most famous of the School runs. On a day at the end of Christmas Term (it used to be usually the first Thursday in December) practically the whole School would assemble at the Quad Gates to watch a couple of Hares, with a pair of bags strapped over their shoulders, set out to lay the trail, where-



["Wide World Photos."

SQUADRON-LEADER ORLEBAR OF SCHNEIDER CUP FAME.

upon the hounds would begin to strip themselves. But only boys of over seventeen who have satisfied the doctor of their fitness for the test are allowed to compete, for the course, which follows roads and footpaths to Crick village and thence back by Hillmorton, with a third of a mile run-in along the Hillmorton Road, is a full twelve miles and takes some doing. This race has now for many years been run in March.

Times have been considerably cut down since Jex-Blake won the blue riband of Rugby running in 1850. Many people thought that E. M. B. Kellet's 1 hr. 15 min. 15 sec. of 1889 could not possibly be beaten, but in 1908 R. W. Dugdale returned 1 hr. 12 min. 20 sec. after a terrific struggle with S. E. Swann, who also beat all previous records, except that made by A. R. Welsh, the Cambridge Miler and Cross Country Blue, in 1901.

In this connection it must be mentioned that E. A. and F. A. Montague hold the peculiar distinction of being the only brothers who have ever both won the Crick Run. The elder brother's time of 1 hr. 12 min. 49 sec. remains the third or fourth best time on record. E. A. Montague takes his place among famous Rugbeian runners for yet other reasons. In 1918 he won the Public Schools Challenge Cups at Stamford Bridge for the Mile in 4 min. 45⅕ sec. and the ¾-Mile Steeplechase with a new record of 4 min. 8 sec. He won the 3 miles twice for Oxford against Cambridge, and represented England internationally and Great Britain in the 3,000 metres steeplechase at the Olympic Games.

The "distinction" in running at Rugby is a dark and light blue ribbon worn by the VIII, who also wear white shorts and vest trimmed with dark blue for the runs. The Cricket XI wear white trousers—instead of the uniform grey of the whole School both at cricket and football—white boots, a light blue shirt and cap and a light blue ribbon on their straw hats. Second Year XI's wear a dark blue blazer with light blue trimming; First Year XI's a white blazer with light blue trimmings; but for the match at Lord's against Marlborough all the team wear the more distinguished blazer. The XXII, who correspond to the "Caps" at Rugger, wear a dark blue cap and have a dark blue edging to their white blazers with a ribbon of the same for the straw hat. The third "distinction," which is the tie, corresponds more or less to "Bags" at Rugger.

For Rugby Football, "distinctions" vary considerably. The XV wear a white jersey emblazoned with the School crest, blue knickers and dark and light blue striped stockings. "Caps," numbering about twenty in addition to the XV, white shorts and jerseys with House crest and House "follow-up" cap of velvet with gold or silver braid and tassels. The XV have a red, white and blue band for their straws.

Next come the "Flannels," probably another twenty, who wear black stockings and a crest on the straw. A boy is said, actually, to get his "bags"; the term

" Flannels " relating to the time when the promotion carried the privilege of wearing flannels while other players of less distinction wore ducks.

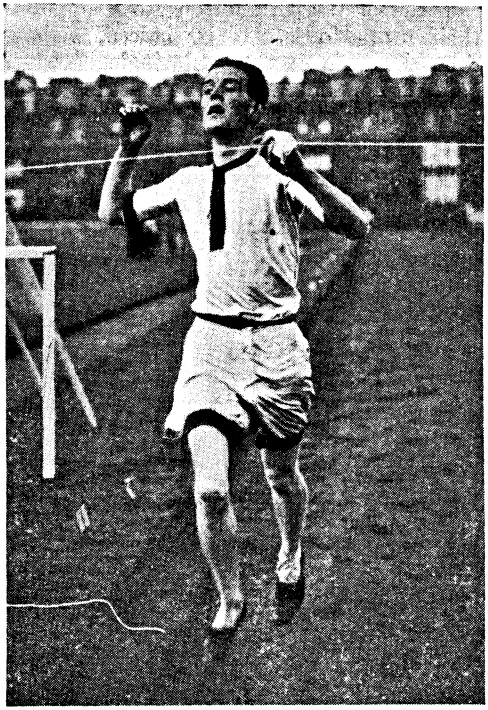
Rugby has not, perhaps, the same wealth of idiom as is supplied by the Winchester " Notions," yet it is full enough in all conscience. The reader who seeks full enlightenment upon this matter and who wishes to understand the psychology of Middle School life is referred to G. F. Bradley's excellent book *Dick*.

The junior's day at Rugby begins about 6.30 a.m., when the boys' man, or butler, arouses the sleepers, who presently indulge in a quick " tosh," or wash ; a " fug," or biscuit, may be eaten if there is no time for a " coffee stodge " of biscuits and coffee. " Dic," or prayers, precedes " C.O.," which is Call Over, and there is always the hope of a " cut," just as the men at Winchester " raise a shirk " and take their departure when a master is fifteen minutes late. If a boy has not worked well he may find himself on the " Super List," with fears



THE HON. M. J. BROOKS,

Holder Inter-University High Jump record, 6 ft. 2½ in., made in 1876.



[*Sport & General.*

E. A. MONTAGUE,

who achieved athletic distinction at Rugby, made his debut at the Public School Sports Meeting in 1918, and gained further honours as an Oxford Blue and English International.

of being superannuated, under Dr. Temple's institution ; but he hopes to survive " tag," a task, and " slip," which are questions on paper, and to get his " three weeks," by being promoted to the form above, through being top of his present form in classics for three weeks. He may avoid trouble if he gets on the " stopping out " list through illness, or a " paved " (annotated) text may help him ; but he may be " had over," i.e. caned, if he fails in his task. To add to his other sorrows he may have to " fug out " some Sixth fellow's " den " and is always liable to be summoned by a " fag call," which must be answered at once, on the principle of last fag up getting the job to do, just when he wants to " go down town."

In the case of a big fellow who has been in Hall for seven or more terms, a good deal of custom affecting his " young 'un," i.e. younger brother, does not concern him any more, since his privileged state exempts him from most " side rules," which is the custom that only " bucks " may walk on

the side of the Hillmorton Road opposite their own House. It is, indeed, a long time since his own "lamb-singing" when he, as a new boy, had to pipe a tune at an informal dormitory chorus, and got a good deal rougher handling than is the lot of kids from "other places" nowadays. Many, indeed, escape the "lamb-singing" which now survives in only two or three houses. Another thing, he is no longer made to "smoke," or blush, by being "dried up," or told to shut up.

In most houses the table in Hall next in importance to the Sixth table is known as the "bucks' table"; similarly the dormitory for the biggest boys is known as the "bucks' dorm." One other pleasing phrase is "Bigside Dics" for Wednesday morning prayers, which take place in the Speech Room instead of in chapel, as on other days of the week. "Bigside" is the regular epithet used to describe any occasion in which the whole school participates.

Special buildings and places, of course, have special names: for instance, between Speech Room and Steele's is the Temple Reading Room, with the Art Museum over it, referred to generally by Rugbeians as "the Bug." The name was, not unnaturally, first given to the Natural History Museum; the Vivarium was then termed the "Live Bug"; next, the N.H.S. Museum and Library became the "Dead Bug," the Temple Library and Museum, "The Temple Bug," and so, generally, just "the Bug"; while yet another building is merely the "Tin Tabernacle."

One final note, which is reminiscent of the means whereby concrete expression was given to the Founder's declared intentions at Harrow, must deal with the Lower School of Lawrence Sheriff. Developments during the nineteenth century rendered Rugby School education unsuitable for, or undesired by, the sons of local tradesmen, whom the Founder intended to benefit; and so the "Subordinate School," as it is usually called, was founded to give effect to the spirit, if not the letter, of Lawrence Sheriff's original intentions.

The good intent of the Founder is commemorated in the prayer which is said each Sunday and on high days:

"We give Thee most humble and hearty thanks, O most merciful Father, for our Founder Lawrence Sheriffe, and for all our Governors and Benefactors, by whose benefit this whole school is brought up to godliness and good learning."

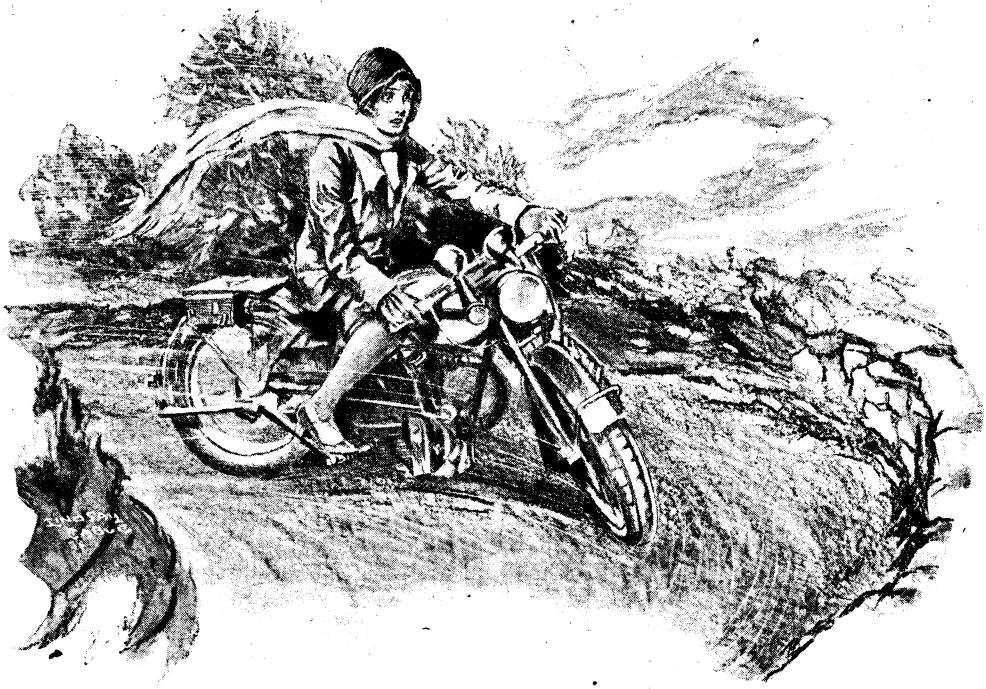
And the work of that School is made plain to the Public each Speech Day in June, when the Old Rugbeians' Cricket Match is played, and proud parents come to see their offspring, clad in dress clothes, step up to receive their prizes from the Headmaster.

Other celebrated gatherings are House Suppers, just before Christmas, at which O.R.'s attend according to their Houses. Founder's Day has been arbitrarily fixed as All Saints' Day, since no man knows when Lawrence Sheriff was born. The Foxe Sermon is preached in the morning and the O.R. Matches, for 1st and 2nd XV's, are played in the afternoon. But the last day of each Advent Term, when "Cock Houses" are played, must not be forgotten, for surely those games are unique. One side is made up of the two Cock House XV's (winners and runners-up), together with O.R.'s of both Houses to any number; their opponents being all other members of the School with "distinctions" and any O.R.'s who are down for the day.

There may be over one hundred players on the ground, the scrums are protracted to marvellous length, and when one or other goal appears in jeopardy it is no unusual thing for the spectators to join in the mêlée. Up to 1901 the Sixth Match and the O.R. Match were played on the same immense plan, but since then have become more scientific in the normal playing of orthodox Rugger.

NEXT MONTH—WESTMINSTER SCHOOL.

Back Numbers containing the articles on ETON, HARROW and WINCHESTER can still be obtained. Later issues will include SHREWSBURY, CLIFTON, CHELTENHAM, HAILEYBURY, CHARTERHOUSE and others.



" Pamela had no means of guessing that the turn she was approaching bore so close a resemblance in shape to that now obsolete aid to feminine tidiness."

THE PRECIPITATE LADY

By A. M. BURRAGE

ILLUSTRATED BY LINDSAY CABLE

PAMELA TORBY saw the red triangle which urges caution, and she also saw something vague about a " dangerous bend," but she took no particular notice. In the hundred and something miles she had driven her motor-cycle that day she had passed many scores of such warning signs, and safely negotiated many dangerous bends, of which highroads and byroads in the West Country are not conspicuously lacking. But she had no means of guessing that the turn she was approaching bore so close a resemblance in shape to that now obsolete aid to feminine tidiness, the hairpin.

By the time she had realised it she was too late to avoid disaster. Right on the turn there was a low stone wall, with a cottage garden and a cottage beyond. There was a terrific impact . . .

WHEN Pamela came to, she was lying on a couch in a long, low and rather dark room, with an old-fashioned open fireplace on her left and the setting sun winking through a lattice window straight before her. But at first she had eyes only for a tall, lean young man with very blue eyes and an expression of the most intense concern, who was squeezing a sponge into a basin. Pamela, in her bemused state, felt

that he was the most extremely likeable person she had ever seen.

"Why, you're a darling!" she thought. "I know I could love you! I know I could!"

Pamela dreamily observed that consternation and incredulity instantly stamped themselves on the young man's face. "Eh?" he said. Then she realised that she must have uttered her thoughts aloud, but just then it did not seem greatly to matter.

The young man bent over her.

"How are you feeling?" he asked gently.

"What's the matter with my head?" Pamela asked.

"Nothing."

"Didn't I fall on it? Haven't I been stunned?"

"No, you fell on your shoulder. You must have fainted. Would you mind seeing if you can move, and how much, and what with? You may have something sprained or broken, and I'm not a doctor, so I'm just going to fetch one."

Pamela tested herself gingerly. She found herself able to move all her limbs and put her feet on the floor. Her left arm and shoulder were extremely painful, but there was plainly nothing broken.

"Good!" said the young man. "Now drink this."

"What is it?" she asked.

"Brandy."

"Oh, I hate brandy."

"Good! All the more reason why brandy will like you. Hold your nose and swallow it quickly."

Pamela obeyed the latter part of the behest, and there came over her an almost instantaneous sense of renewed well-being. She sat up and began to wonder if she looked a fright, and, if so, just how frightful a fright.

"What about my motor-bike?" she asked.

"It is all there," he answered, "but not exactly as it was a few minutes ago. The entire village is at present surrounding it and regarding it with awe. You left it on the other side of the wall."

"Left it?"

"Yes. You came over, you see. You made a nasty dint in one of my flower-beds. Living as I do on this corner and at the bottom of this hill, I keep a special flower-bed for the reception of people who call, so to speak, on the spur of the moment, like yourself. It is useless to plant it with anything but very simple and hardy cottage flowers. And now I will leave you, and call Mrs. Dibblechick to look after you for awhile."

"Mrs. Dibblechick?"

"Incredible as it may seem, it is her own name, or, rather, her late husband's. She is my housekeeper. You may require bandaging, and—er—well, it would be better if a woman did it."

Once more Pamela tested herself.

"I don't think I do, thank you," she said. "It's only just my left arm and shoulder, and, of course, I'm a bit shaken up."

"In that case," he said, "I will send Mrs. Dibblechick for the doctor. I insist on your seeing a doctor before you leave here."

Mrs. Dibblechick entered the room at that precise moment, bringing with her in two preoccupied hands a vessel containing much hot water, a huge roll of surgical wool, a small wooden medicine chest and a bottle of smelling-salts. She was a tall woman in black, with a large wart on her nose and a squint which had to be seen to be believed. The young man addressed her:

"It's all right, Mrs. Dibblechick. The lady doesn't think she's badly hurt. But all the same, I think you'd better run and get Dr. Gaines. There's nothing like making sure in these matters."

Mrs. Dibblechick focussed her two cross eyes upon the patient who smiled and nodded.

"There, now, ain't you lucky, miss!" she exclaimed. "But then everybody wot comes over that wall is lucky."

The remark amused Pamela, but she hid her amusement until Mrs. Dibblechick's back was turned. The withdrawal of the housekeeper coincided with the arrival of Pongo, a half-bred sheep-dog with an inquisitive and friendly disposition. Pongo, despite Pamela's entreaties, was sternly ordered away.

"I haven't begun to thank you yet," said Pamela, when they were alone once more.

"What, for living close behind a death-trap for strangers?"

"For looking after me and taking all this trouble. I don't suppose you're to blame for the way the road twists. It was all my fault. I was going much too fast. What did Mrs. Dibblechick mean by saying that everybody who comes over that wall was lucky?"

The young man laughed.

"*Experto crede.* Mrs. Dibblechick and I have both had some."

Pamela felt a little light-headed and began to laugh foolishly. Mrs. Dibblechick's name



" Pamela's head was aching, and she held her hands to it so that she might laugh without causing herself too much pain."

and appearance both amused and fascinated her.

" Excuse me," she said, " but where did you find Mrs. Dibblechick ? "

" Within a yard of where I found you."

" I beg your pardon ? "

" Oh, quite literally. That was two years ago. Mrs. Dibblechick lost control of a push-bike on the hill, and ended—or nearly ended—by sailing over the wall like a rocket. I went out to pick up the pieces but found her fairly intact. She was then in service at a farm up the hill but had given notice to leave. I wanted a housekeeper and she

wanted a job, so she remained, so to speak, where she had fallen. I had then been here over three months without domestic help, and I can tell you I was getting fed up with it."

Pamela stared at him.

"Excuse my being inquisitive," she said, "but how did you get here?"

"Oh, same way," he answered casually.

Pamela's head was aching, and she held her hands to it so that she might laugh without causing herself too much pain.

"Same way!" she repeated.

"Almost literally. I happen to be one of those people who make ugly splashes on canvas, and there's good painting stuff around here, so I wanted to settle for a time. I was being driven in a friend's car when he piled it against the garden wall. The steering-wheel stopped him from going any farther, although he hurt himself pretty badly, but I went through the wind-screen and over the wall with hardly a scratch. I learned that the cottage was to let, so I promptly took it. In effect, I simply stayed where I fell."

Pamela giggled helplessly.

"And the dog?" she said. "Don't say that Pongo was thrown over the wall too."

"No. I'm sorry. He wasn't thrown over. He just jumped over."

"What!"

"He happened to belong to the farm where Mrs. Dibblechick used to be employed, and he'd evidently taken a fancy to her. So he came and adopted us. Fifteen shillings and three pints of cider made him legally mine."

Pamela continued to laugh.

"It seems to me," she said, "that everybody who comes over that wall simply stays here."

Having said it she, of course, wished she hadn't, but her host seemed gallantly unaware that she had said anything which a modest maiden might regret.

"And the miracle is that they don't hurt themselves much," he added. "That bend is a scandal. Gaines—the doctor who'll be coming in to see you—says that it ought to be worth five hundred a year to him if there were anything like traffic on the road. By the way, I hope you weren't going far? I'm afraid your motor-bike couldn't help you much, even if you felt well enough to ride it. I might be able to get you a car, if you feel like it; but we'll have to hear what Gaines says first."

It was not until then that they exchanged names. She learned that his was Perring, and guessed that the Richard which preceded it was contracted into Dick by his intimates. At least, she began forthwith to think of him as Dick. He was that kind of man. And she told him how she was on her way to spend a fortnight with some friends who had taken a furnished house near Mullion. Her mother, who was another member of the party, had gone on by train; but she, having the motor-cycle, had adventured all the way from London by road. She had spent one night on the way, and was sure that there would be no anxiety about her if she spent two. She was on holiday and had some clerical appointment in London. Perring guessed that she was the daughter of well-to-do people, and that she was one of those young women of to-day who prefer to be at least partly independent.

On her side Pamela guessed him to be a man with ideals and ambition, with just sufficient private means to enable him to follow his own star without being handicapped by hardship. And in both cases their surmises were nearly enough correct. In the midst of their talk Dr. Gaines arrived, and Perring, having made them acquainted, left them together. After about a quarter of an hour the young doctor came out and joined him.

"Well," he said, "no bones broken, but there's a bad bruise or two and a pretty bad shaking. She mustn't dream of going far to-night, and to-morrow she won't want to. She'll feel the after effects for some time to come. I suppose the tongue of scandal will wag itself off if she stays with you, but I can get them to put her up at Brooker Farm and run her down there in the bus."

Perring agreed that that would be best and returned to Pamela, to be thanked for what he had done and apologised to for the trouble he had been given. Later he and Gaines escorted her to Brooker Farm in the doctor's car, and handed her over to the homely and hospitable care of the farmer's wife. Gaines had already taken his leave of her, and Perring was about to go, when she called him back and addressed him with the least little anxious lights in her eyes.

"You know when I was coming to, after I'd fainted?" she said.

"Yes."

"Well—er—did I say anything?"

"No," said Perring stoutly.

"You're quite sure?"

"Quite sure."

"If I had, it wouldn't have meant anything."

" Of course not."

" Well, good night, and thanks so very, very much."

Next morning Perring walked round to inquire after her, and met Gaines coming away.

" Told you so," he said. " She oughtn't to be up at all to-day, but although I've ordered her back to bed she won't go. But she can't get far to-day—or to-morrow. And she's worried because she's afraid her mother will be worrying about her."

Perring entered the house and found a pale and fretful Pamela, who repeated several times that she didn't know what to do.

" If I telegraph to mother she'll have fifty fits, and she won't believe that I really sent the wire or that I'm not dead. And if I don't wire she'll worry herself to death, because I ought to have arrived last night."

" I could borrow a car," said Perring, " and hop over to Mullion. It won't take long. And then I can explain things to your mother in such a way as to allay her anxieties and, if she likes, bring her back with me to see the pieces."

Pamela's face lit up. It had occurred to her that he might make some such offer, but she could hardly have brought herself to hint at it.

" It's much too good of you," she said. " Aren't you glad somebody doesn't fall over your wall every day ? "

A few minutes after two o'clock that afternoon Perring arrived at the house near Mullion and asked for Mrs. Torby. He found her to be a tall, fragile-looking lady with a frigid and somewhat hostile manner towards strangers and an unrelenting air towards the world in general. At first she exhibited symptoms of the deepest distress, but grew calm when Perring assured her that he had left Pamela reading on the couch in the farm parlour. When she heard that her daughter ought to stay where she was for the present, she said : " Very well, I will come and nurse her if there is any nursing to be done."

Perring did not enjoy the return journey with Mrs. Torby as a passenger. She was inquisitorial and soon found out all the superficial facts about him. When she dis-



" ' H-h-how did you get here ? ' he stammered, when he realised what he had done."

covered that he was a painter—and probably a poor one—who lived all the year round in a small cottage in a remote Cornish village, she made it quite clear that she thought Pamela might have exercised a little more discretion and caused herself to be flung into some other garden.

The workings of Mrs. Torby's mind were as obvious as those of a watch seen under a glass case. Here was the type of young man that might attract Pamela; she would be grateful to him; and they might both take it into their heads to think that the circumstances of their meeting were romantic. She therefore did her best to destroy at least one bud with a nip of frost.

"Poor Pamela! I do hope she won't have to stay long in this farmhouse. Pamela gets bored so easily, and she really loathes the country, and can only endure it at all in a large house with crowds of friends. She's really only happy in London when she can dance all night and every night. I don't know when the child manages to sleep, particularly as she has work to do during the day."

Perring uttered a polite kind of grunt.

"I am afraid she has been badly spoilt," Mrs. Torby proceeded, "for her late father brought her up to be wickedly extravagant. Having to sit about all day long in a farmhouse will be a real penance to her."

"Trespassers will be prosecuted," thought Perring grimly. "Well, well, I shouldn't ask a town mouse to share my country crumbs if I thought she was going to be unhappy. Perhaps it's as well that I've been warned in time. I've been thinking rather too much about that young woman since she precipitated herself into my life."

He delivered the mother over to her daughter, received the thanks of both, and went home determined to see as little of either of them as possible and to pay only the most perfunctory visits of inquiry.

But alas for human weakness! Perring discovered that he wanted to paint the outbuildings at the back of Brooker's Farm, and as Pamela had been told to sit in the garden and get all the sun and fresh air she could, it was natural that she should have her chair carried close to his easel and talk to him while he painted.

Mrs. Torby was not long in discovering this, and she promptly made it a party of three. Her favourite topics of conversation were Pamela's extravagance and her love of town life, and the problem of how much longer Pamela must remain a prisoner in the wilderness.

It was obvious that Mrs. Torby would have wafted her daughter away on the morning after her arrival, but the stupid Dr. Gaines forbade her removal and kept on forbidding it, and Pamela herself refused to go. And it was strange that, while Mrs. Torby was extremely restless and fidgety, the patient herself, who was supposed to love a life of hectic gaiety, bore her enforced quiet with extraordinary fortitude.

"Mother doesn't understand me a bit," she said to Perring one day. Perring said nothing in reply; he wondered.

The Torbys were at the farm for a full fortnight before Dr. Gaines lifted his ban. So it happened that one sullen August evening Perring walked down to the farm to say good-bye. They were catching a very early train on the morrow.

Pamela was subdued, but Mrs. Torby was now almost cordial to him. They both thanked him for his kindness and trouble, and Mrs. Torby seemed even more grateful than Pamela, and heartily seconded her daughter's suggestion that he should call and see them when he came to Town. She had already elicited the information that he visited the metropolis about once in two years, and then probably walked about in grey flannel trousers and a shooting jacket.

Perring shook hands with them both, made an excellent pretence of being cheerful, promised to write soon, and walked out into the evening air. Outside he paused and lit a pipe with a steady hand. Well, that was over! It was a good job he hadn't permitted himself the luxury of that fool's dream, or only, say, a bare taste of it. Yet he had heard those first words she spoke to him, and he knew that she had meant them. In other circumstances they could have loved and been happy, but it was in their horoscopes that they were not for each other.

Like a sensible man he got control over the little gnawing pain in his heart, swore to himself that it was no pain at all, and that Pamela's stay in the village was an episode which would soon fade from his memory.

He had his supper and was filling and lighting another pipe when Mrs. Dibblechick burst in upon him.

"Please, sir, there's somebody in the garden!"

"In the garden?"

"Come over the wall, I think, by the look. Another accident."

"Oh, lor'!" exclaimed Perring, springing up. "I heard nothing."

He rushed out into the dusky garden. In the same spot where he had found Pamela lying a fortnight before a female figure reclined face downwards. He knew instinctively that it was Pamela herself, but the agony of dread which immediately swamped his mind would not let him ask himself how she could have had a second and similar accident. He rushed to her and lifted her in his arms.

"Pamela! Darling!"

The inert body took life in his arms. It bent with laughter. Then arms stole around his neck and two lips were raised towards him, mutely asking to be kissed. He kissed them because it was the exactly natural thing to do.

"H-h-how did you get here?" he stammered, when he realised what he had done.

"Over the wall."

"You didn't fall?"

"No, I climbed. I thought everybody who came here over the wall always stayed here, but you wouldn't take a hint the first time."

"Pamela," he exclaimed, holding her tight, "you don't mean that you—that you—that you——"

No, it was useless. He could not bring it out.

"You know what I think of you," she whispered. "You heard me say it once. And I knew you wanted me, only you let mother head you off. I had to do something. I wasn't going away and let you forget me, and then some other girl—who wouldn't make you as good a wife as I shall—might come and fall over your wretched old wall. I'm not quite a fool in spite of what mother says. I—I could learn to wash your paint-brushes or something."

Perring bent to her and stopped her fresh young mouth. He felt that it was not the time to discuss practical matters.

. . . . . .

PEOPLE are apt to remark that the low stone wall standing on the hairpin bend is a danger to the community. Perring, however, has been heard to say that it was the means of obtaining for him a good house, a good dog, a good servant and a good wife.

FACING THE WINDS.

OH, the splendour of winds when the winds are strong
And the road running straight and the way so long.
Oh, the glory of winds when they're blowing apace
With a wild strong sting on your upturned face!
There is Life in the winds—in their strength-giving breath
Which is full of the triumph of Life and Death.
Oh, give me the hills where the winds blow free
And fresh with the scent of the salted sea,
Or the lonely shore and the incoming tide
Where the winds sweep down and the sands stretch wide.

Though the winds may freeze through the cold night storm,
Though the winds may freeze and you still feel warm,
Then you've found the Life which the wild winds bring,
And the strength of winds in their wild strong sting,
And the joy of fight with the wind's strong might
When the world is dark and you seek for light.
Then turn your face to the winds again
And fight to the end till you lose your pain—
Till you hear the Love in the wild wind's song,
And you know that the winds shall make you strong.

VIOLA LE STRANGE.

THE WOMAN WHO LEFT HER HUSBAND

By RICHMAL CROMPTON

ILLUSTRATED BY E. WELCH RIDOUT

SHE packed her suitcase with trembling haste. She wouldn't take anything but just what she'd need for the night. She must be safely away before he came back. She'd go to her sister's for that night, then she'd look round. Perhaps she'd take up some work. She'd been a journalist before her marriage. Anyway, she had enough money to live on. She was financially independent of him. She thanked God for that.

She didn't love anyone else, but she didn't love him any longer. He got on her nerves. He got on her nerves so intolerably that she couldn't eat or sleep. It was ruining her health. It was killing her. Everything he did or said exasperated her so much that she wanted to scream aloud. He had a hundred irritating little mannerisms that she hadn't noticed before she married him. He would sit with his elbows on the arm of his chair and slowly, deliberately, join the tips of his fingers one after the other, part them, join them again, part them—slowly, deliberately, one after the other as he talked. He was continually smoothing back his hair with his hand. He would sit reading in the evening with one leg crossed over the other, moving his foot up and down, up and down, up and down, with a funny little circular movement. And he had a hundred other unconscious tricks that maddened her. She'd begun to watch for them continually, her nerves tense and quivering. When he sat reading in the evenings, and moved his foot up and down, round and round, she had to bite her lip to keep herself from screaming. She had to hold herself down in her chair to keep from flinging herself upon him in hysterical fury. Then there were his little clichés of speech. They came over and over again. "The fact of the matter is——"; "You see——"; "I mean to say——"; "I may be old-fashioned but I prefer——"; "I may be narrow-minded but I do think——". She was listening for them all the time. She'd got to such a state that she hardly heard what he was saying because she was always waiting for them. She hadn't noticed them at all before she married him. She didn't begin to notice them till some months after the honeymoon. When she realised that her secret irritation at them was growing uncontrollable, she made an effort to induce him to give them up, but she soon realised the futility of it. He was a middle-aged man. They were second nature to him. It would have been as impossible for him to give them up as it would have been for him to alter his expression or the shape of his hands.

When she asked him not to move his foot up and down and round and round, he was surprised and amused. He said that he'd had no idea he was doing it and he promised not to do it again. She knew that he honestly thought that he hadn't done it again though he was doing it again within five minutes after she had spoken about it.

She'd loved him desperately before his little mannerisms had begun to get on her nerves. She didn't love him at all now. She'd lost sight of him. She saw nothing of him, heard nothing of him, but the little things that jarred on her. She was resentfully aware of the absurdity of the situation. It lacked dignity. She could not claim to be a wronged wife. He had been consist-

ently kind and considerate to her ever since their marriage. He'd never shown the slightest interest in any other woman. She felt that she could have endured any real wrong more easily than this. She could have shown herself generous and forgiving had there been some real wrong to forgive. It would have been better than this daily, hourly jarring of her nerves, this ceaseless, quivering irritation. Or if she couldn't forgive him, she could have left him with some dignity, some justification in the eyes of the world. Her present reason for leaving him was, she knew, indefensible. She didn't even try to defend it.

She wondered what people would say about it. They wouldn't, of course, take it at its face value. They'd invent secret failings for him or for her. They'd claim to know what lay behind the story. It was all hateful; but of course people's interest and curiosity would die down in time. They'd come to accept the facts as they were—she living alone or with her sister and working again at journalism; he—well, he'd get along all right, she supposed. It would be better than this at any rate. This was slowly killing her.

She'd only decided to leave him about an hour ago. The idea had come to her quite suddenly. They were having coffee after lunch and he was discussing the political situation, as he loved to do. She was sitting, nerves tense and quivering as usual, not hearing what he was saying, listening only for the little ever-recurring clichés, "You see——"; "I mean to say——"; "I may be old-fashioned but I do think——"; "The fact of the matter is——", watching only for the little movements that came as she knew they would come one after the other; the fingers joined together, the foot moving up and down, round and round. . . . Suddenly she was terrified by the hatred of him that she saw for the first time in her heart. She thought of the long years with him that lay before her and she knew that she couldn't face them, couldn't live through them. She looked at his kindly, pleasant face, and tried desperately but without avail to call back her old love for him.

He was speaking in his slow, deliberate voice.

"The fact of the matter is that the Government has been too weak all along the line. I mean to say, it's expected gentlemanly treatment from men who——"

As he spoke he moved his foot up and down, round and round. And quite suddenly with a sense of almost delirious relief came the realisation that she needn't face the long years with him, that she could leave him. It was almost unbelievably simple. She could leave him. She could just walk out of the house and never come back again. She'd gone upstairs almost at once. She'd heard him go out of the house. He wouldn't be back till tea-time. . . .

She fastened up her suitcase and went across to the little writing-table at the window. She must leave him some explanation, of course. That was going to be rather difficult. Then suddenly that too became perfectly clear and simple. All she need say was that she was leaving him because she didn't love him any longer. She wrote the words quickly, put the note on her dressing-table, snatched up her suitcase and hurried downstairs. Fate favoured her. There was no one about the hall to wonder why she was taking a suitcase. She hurried down to the station. The London train was just in.

She got into an empty carriage.

The train steamed off.

She leant back pale and breathless, and closed her eyes.

She was free, free at last. She was herself. She could relax. She needn't watch him stroking his hair, joining together his finger-tips, moving his foot up and down and round and round, ever again—ever again. . . . She was free. . . .

She must have dropped into a short doze, because when she woke up another woman was in the carriage. The train must have stopped at a station while she was asleep. She looked at the woman curiously. She could not see her face. A short veil hung from her hat-brim and she sat in the shadow. Noel felt a curiously impelling desire to confide in her. She wanted to justify herself to someone. She wanted to hear someone say that she was right.

Tentatively she began:

"Would you like the window up?"

"No, thank you," said the woman.

There was something vaguely familiar in the voice. Noel tried again to see the woman's face more clearly, but the hanging veil shadowed it. Suddenly the woman said, "Are you going far?"

Noel was amazed to find herself saying abruptly:

"Yes . . . I've left my husband."

She could hardly believe that she'd said the words till she actually heard them. She hadn't meant to say them.

The woman turned and looked at her



under the shadow of her veil. She did not seem at all surprised. Breathlessly, stumblingly, Noel continued:

"It wasn't that—I mean, he's awfully good and kind. He's always been faithful to me. It's just—it's just the little things he does and says. They've got on my nerves so that—that I *had* to go. If I didn't go,



"Noel gave a cry, then cowered back, holding out her hands as if to ward off a blow."

I'd have killed him—or myself. Do you understand ? "

There was a short silence, then the woman said slowly :

" Yes, I understand. . . ."

The woman sat very still. Her " I understand " had brought a strange relief to Noel's heart. It was as if she had been finally acquitted of any guilt in leaving Harold. The feeling of relief made her expansive.

" It's the little things that matter so, isn't it ? " she said. " Far more than the big things. I feel that I could have put up with something big. It's the little irritating things—little habits—the things he does—the way he says things—the same things over and over again till I'm on the watch for them all the time and wanting to scream. . . ."

" I know," said the woman in her still expressionless voice. " I felt like that."

Noel turned to her again.

" You ? "

" Yes. I left my husband for that reason, too."

" Did you ? Then you do understand ? So many people would blame me. You won't. You know what it is, don't you ? Watching for them and wanting to scream. He sits with his legs crossed and moves his foot about all the time. Up and down . . . round and round."

" I know . . . I know," said the woman. " I understand. I felt like that."

Noel looked at her curiously.

" Did—did your husband try to make you go back to him ? "

" No," said the woman, and added in the same expressionless voice : " You see, he was killed the day I left him. He was killed only a few hours after I left him."

Noel caught her breath with horror. Her heart was beating unevenly.

" Killed. Oh, how *terrible* ! How was he killed ? "

" I wrote a note to say that I was leaving him because I didn't love him any more."

" I've done that, too," said Noel breathlessly.

" He thought I'd gone away with a man who used to come to the house a good deal—a friend of his. He was desperate. Our home was on the edge of a moor——"

" Our home is on the edge of a moor, too," put in Noel.

" He went out on to the moor. He always used to walk over the moors when he had difficult problems to decide. He went out to think what to do. He was walking along without knowing or caring where he went. He was desperate at having lost me. Mists come up very quickly over the moor——"

" I know. . . ."

" He hardly realised that a mist had come up. He just walked on thinking of me. There was an old quarry on the moors——"

" I know. There's one on the moors near us, too," said Noel.

" It was supposed to have railings round, but they'd been broken in places for years and no one had thought of mending them. It wasn't suicide. Some people said it was suicide, but it wasn't. They found him in the quarry the next morning. He was dead. He'd just walked into it in the mist. He was so wretched that he didn't know or care where he was going. I came home at once, of course. He was dead. I've always felt that I killed him."

The woman's voice was faint and far away, without feeling, without hope, without life.

Noel was surprised to find that tears were coursing down her cheeks.

" Oh no, you didn't," she said unsteadily. " But how terrible for you. How long was it ago ? "

" Ten years," said the woman in her dull, lifeless voice. " Ten years. For ten years I've not forgotten it for one minute of one day. For ten years I've longed and hungered to hear the little phrases, to see the little movements that used to irritate me so. I'd give my soul to have him back for one hour, to hear him say, ' The fact of the matter is——', to see him stroke his hair back and drum his fingers on the chair-arm. . . . I was so wrong. They should have been so dear to me. They were part of what made him himself. They were what made him different from other men. I ought to have loved them so. They ought to have been to me what a child's funny little ways and turns of speech are to its mother—beloved, intimate, something that makes him himself and no one else. I'd give my life to have Harold back, not without the little things that annoyed me but with them."

Noel stared at the shadowed face, her eyes dilated.

" Harold ! " she repeated in a low voice. " Was he called Harold ? "

The woman did not answer.

She had taken off her glove and raised her bare hand to adjust her veil. Noel looked at her hand. Then she caught her breath again and the blood slowly drained from her

face. Her staring eyes were fixed on the woman's hand. That the engagement ring should be identical with hers was perhaps a small thing, but—the little red birthmark on the back of the hand, the faint scar that was the result of a fall many years ago—



"Harold put up his hand and stroked his hair. She'd been hungering to see him do that ever since she'd come back."

the whole shape and movement. It was all familiar. She shrank back. Her eyes went fearfully to the shadowed face.

"Who are you?" she whispered.

The woman turned to her and slowly raised her veil.

Noel gave a cry, then cowered back, holding out her hands as if to ward off a blow.

She was looking at her own face.

The world went black around her. She dug her nails into her palm, fighting for self-control. Gradually, very gradually, the mist cleared from before her eyes. The faintness left her. She realised that the train had slowed down at a station. People were getting into her carriage. She looked about her. The woman had gone. She must have slipped out of the carriage as soon as the train stopped, before Noel had recovered from that sudden faintness. She snatched up her suitcase and leapt out of the train on to the platform, looking up and down. The woman had disappeared.

She took the next train home.

She met him just as she was going in at the gate.

He was white and dazed-looking. He held her letter in his hand.

"Noel!"

"Come back into the house with me, Harold. I must speak to you."

Her voice was breathlessly urgent.

"I thought you'd gone with Waring," he said slowly.

"Waring! I never cared twopence for him."

He turned and went back into the house with her.

They faced each other across the little sitting-room.

"Where were you going?" she said.

"I was going up on to the moors. To think things out. You've given me a knock-out blow, Noel. I can't believe it and yet I've got to believe it. Why have you come back? You said in your letter that you were never coming back again."

She spoke steadily, meeting his gaze without flinching.

"Can you forget I ever wrote the letter, forget I ever went? I was mad. Forgive me. Forget it. I love you with all my heart and soul."

He couldn't look into her eyes and not believe that.

"But—why——?" he began, bewildered.

"I was mad," she said again. "I thought just for a minute that I hated you. Then—I met a ghost."

"A ghost?"

"Yes. I'll tell you sometime perhaps. Not now. And I knew I loved you with all my heart and soul. I came back. I've been running all the way from the station. I was so afraid of being too late."

"Too late?"

"You don't understand, but I might have been too late."

"Noel," he said unsteadily, "I adore you so . . . I worship you so . . . tell me . . . if it wasn't Waring, was it?—once you said that little things I did irritated you. I've tried not to do them since; but I may have done them, said them without knowing it. Was it that?"

"No, no, *no*. *Nothing* you do or say could irritate me. I love everything about you. The little things you do and say are what make you yourself—different from other people. I know that now. Won't you forget it all?"

He came across and took her in his arms.

"Swear you love me."

"I swear."

She clung to him. Her kiss wiped out the past hour for him. He released her and went to the window.

"Hello," he said, "there's one of those thick white mists coming up over the moor."

She shivered.

He put up his hand and stroked his hair.

She'd been hungering to see him do that ever since she'd come back.

"The fact of the matter is——" he began.

PERFECTION.

HE always winds his watch at night;
Exactly are his tyres inflated;
His fountain pen will always write;
His calendar's correctly dated;
His dog and car and wireless set
Receive their licences to time;
His silver pencil works—and yet
It never writes a rhyme.

E. E.

LITTLE DOMBEY

By FRANK SHAY

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

WE stood facing each other across the walnut table in the private room of Caulfield's book-shop. Further argument was useless. Caulfield at one point, Cheney at another, and I at the third: a scalene triangle.

"Well, I won't take it and that settles my point," I said to Caulfield.

"But, my dear Gregory" (confound his patronising "my dear"), "you can't do without it. Why, it's the very copy Stevenson presented to W. E. Henley, the poet. It is positively unique——"

"So is your price, Caulfield," I interrupted. "I won't have it and that's that."

I turned to Cheney:

"As for your sneers, sir, I collect Stevensoniana because it suits my fancy. Do I have to give a valid reason before I am permitted to collect the works of a favoured author? I don't know nor do I care to know why you collect Johnsoniana, nor would I presume to question your motives. You may collect the works of Mrs. Hemans or the first editions of Petroleum V. Nasby for all I care."

I resumed my study of Caulfield's shelves. It was a good shop, a first-class one as book-shops go these days. I could conceive a more ideal shop where one would not be importuned to purchase items one did not want nor could afford. Not that I didn't want the book, a fine, clean copy of the first issue of *Travels with a Donkey* with its intimate inscription, nor that I hadn't the price. It was just that I resented Caulfield's presuming there was no other course for me to follow than the one he had in mind. Caulfield was that way. It wasn't entirely his fault. The blame lay with his rich customers who had neither the wit nor the wisdom to decide for themselves what they wanted. They accepted his word too easily. I liked to approach my purchases with prayer and meditation.

Cheney was none other than Spofford Cheney, the well-known collector of Johnsoniana. There was a permanent scowl on his grey face, a face sandwiched between grey sideburns. In no respect whatever did he fit in with my conception of one who would love Johnson the writer, or Johnson the man. A lover of Samuel Johnson, I argued to myself, should be stout and ruddy, a lover of animated conversation and a trencherman of parts. Above all he would be tolerant of the opinions of others. Cheney, as far as I knew, was none of these. Cheney was lean. Cheney was grey. Cheney was dour of face and person. Cheney looked like an emaciated and melancholy Thackeray. However, he was Cheney, the noted collector.

Cheney had all the intolerance for the passions of others that characterised old-time collectors. Impatient with any other collected writer save his favourite, he sneered at my choice. His objection to R. L. S. was that he was not yet sufficiently ripe for collecting. Once he had said:

"Stevenson may be worth collecting, sir, but I feel he should be allowed to age in the wood of book-shelves. There ought to be fifty years between a writer's death and his coming into vogue with collectors. Takes all of that time for the romance to ripen and for his books to attain sufficient scarcity to make the chase interesting. When such time has elapsed he is, like old wine, ready for the connoisseur."

Each visit to Caulfield's was a repetition of the foregoing. I always resented the bookseller's ability to secure the very items I was turning heaven and earth to find. I resented, too, Cheney's apparent dislike for Stevenson, though I knew it was not Stevenson at all, but my fervour. He was intolerant of any collector who was radical enough to believe anyone born later than the eighteenth century was worth collecting. I really liked the old man. He was the last leaf of the tree under which I sought shelter. He seemed lonely, and I, too, was

lonely. It was nearing dinner hour and I would ask him to have dinner with me.

Caulfield was called to the front of the shop and Cheney and I agreed to bury the hatchet. He had settled himself in a comfortable chair and wanted to talk. I was in a mood to let him.

"Collecting books of a favoured author is a fine art. Much as one collector has in common with his fellow-collectors, you will find a great amount of intoleration. Yet, let two collectors of similar tastes get together and you'll find envy and jealousy added. The elements that enter into the collection and acquisition of a library are well known. A man collects an author because of his love for the author as a writer and as a man. The collector is more the result of this love and admiration than is the case with the general run of Caulfield's customers. They rush in here to listen to the latest fashions in collecting and Caulfield with his fine Italian hand doles them their provender according to their purse. They haven't the necessary capacity to find in themselves love and admiration for any author. They haven't the time nor the inclination to study the life of an author whose work they admire and hunt down his books. Can you conceive their spending a lifetime, sir, a total of sixty-seven years, searching for a single book? Only a man who felt very deeply the love for a man and his work could endure that long."

He did not give me a chance to confess that it was beyond me. Cheney continued:

"No, indeed. They do not make real collectors these days. The mould has been broken or the potter's fingers have become palsied with age. Lowndes was a teething-ring to those old fellows and Brunet an elementary text-book. I remember one in particular, Kenyon was his name, Edwin Payson Kenyon, a bookseller when I first knew him and later a collector. You have probably heard of him as Little Dombey. He, sir, was a collector of the first water."

"Little Dombey," I exclaimed. "Wilberforce Matthews pointed him out to me one day. He was a little queer—at least, in the matter of dress," I hastened to add. "Did you know him well?"

"Not as well as Matthews, perhaps, though I did know him quite intimately. He was the collector who spent sixty-seven years in searching for one book." Cheney was looking over my shoulder and out into the shop.

"Time-clock bookmen," he muttered. "What do they know of books? It is doubtful if they'll ever read their purchases."

"Tell me of Little—Mr. Kenyon," I asked him.

"Not here, Gregory, for look you yonder. Look and see the storm-clouds forming on old Caulfield's face. How he wishes we would leave! Six o'clock, by gad! Time for book-collecting to end: it's not fashionable to worry about books after six in the evening. I'll wager he has an appointment with a—I almost said chicken, sir—damsel. No man can serve two mistresses, and the love of books and the love of women lie in opposite directions. Come with me, you lowly collector of Stevensoniana, and I'll show you a haunt worth two of these."

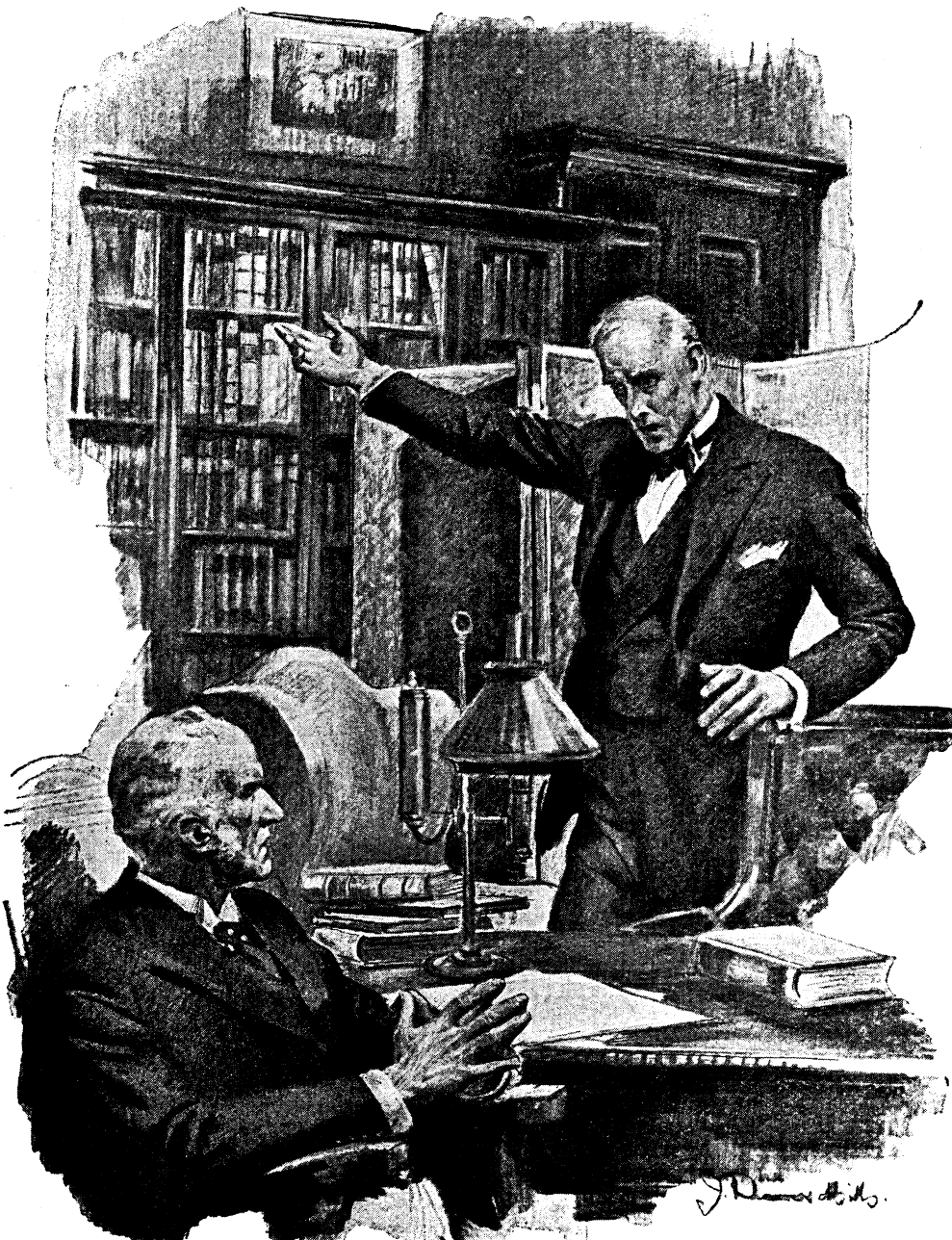
As we passed through the shop to the street I called to Caulfield:

"I'll take that copy of the 'Travels' with me, Caulfield."

We took a taxicab to an address given by Cheney. The way led across Fifth Avenue and down-town towards Washington Square. Stopping before a building that seemed deserted, we entered a dimly lit hallway. He led the way up stairs carpeted to an almost mythical softness. A pass-key opened a door into an apartment. In the darkness I was aware only of a sombre cheerlessness that penetrated my bones. Matches were struck and Cheney lighted the gas in an enormous crystal chandelier and touched an already laid fire. The light from above revealed a room dominated by a large and ungainly walnut writing-table and heavily upholstered chairs mathematically arranged. About the walls were ponderous-looking bookcases with steel-engraved portraits above them. The mantel above the fireplace was draped with a dark-red lambrequin and the windows were curtained in a heavily tasselled material of the same colour. Above the mantel was an oil portrait of an elderly man dressed in the garments of the mid-Victorian period. The crackling fire warmed the scene and gave it the feeling of comfort and homeliness. Behind the writing-table was a chair whose high back seemed to be in direct communication with the crystal chandelier.

"Like it?" queried Cheney. Before I could answer he went on: "The desk and chair belonged to Charles Dickens, so did the writing-sloop and the quills."

We had rid ourselves of our outer clothing and were seated in the comfortable ugly chairs. I left my seat and went to one of the bookcases and peering through the glass



"'But what does it all mean?' I shouted. 'Who boasts ownership of these wonderful collections?'"

doors read the titles. My host, noting my interest, told me to open the doors and take a good look. I did so, and, picking a book at random, found it to be a beautifully encased set of the Pickwick Papers in the original parts as issued, save that this set had the additional interest of being the very copies Dickens had presented to his friend Daniel Maclise. Reverently I turned the pages and just as reverently replaced them in their case and returned the treasure to its place. Each volume in the case, I found, was an unique copy with association interest. Passing to another case, I found Boswell's own copy of the first edition of his life of Johnson. It was the copy Boswell had corrected and sent to the printer for a second edition. The place was, indeed, a bibliomaniac's heaven.

"But what does it all mean?" I shouted. "Who boasts ownership of these wonderful collections? Wherever I put my hands I find volumes that any real collector would give his entire purse for! Whose is it?"

"Not so fast, my dear Gregory.

"You asked me, while we were still at Caulfield's, to tell you about Little Dombey." His voice had a reminiscent tone. "I'd rather tell you the story of these rooms and through their story let you learn the story of Little Dombey. Smoke if you wish; it is a story that should be listened to with a pipe and a glass of wine.

"A glass of wine," he went on, "would break down the walls of reserve, rather it would act as a spark to the fires of conversation. But, persons who have no conception of the social value of wines have ordained that we must endure without them. Perhaps the dinner that will be served later will do what we expect of wine. A dinner, my dear young friend, such as Sam Johnson would lay before a guest."

I had lighted my pipe and was comfortably established in a chair whose ugliness belied its softness. Assured that I was ready, he began his story.

"When first I knew Kenyon he was a bookseller. His shop was a small one and contained little else than valuable and curious books. He was an enemy of junk and no plugs could find room on his shelves. Early in life, when he was sixteen, his stepfather had apprenticed him to a local bookseller in whose employ he remained until he was twenty-five. Then he branched out for himself, taking the store below this apartment. His training had been complete, he knew his trade and prospered. In a few years the business had extended to the rooms back of the shop where he had lived and he was compelled to move into these rooms.

"Early in business he became known as an authority on the works of Dickens, and Dickensians flocked to the shop and made it their headquarters. In those days collectors of Dickens were the radicals of the bibliographic world and were looked upon with scorn. First editions of his works did not command the high prices that are to-day their first characteristic, and, while they were not expensive, were difficult to obtain in this country. Kenyon had made adequate connections in England and was able to care for the slight demand. As the business grew, his sphere extended so that it embraced all the esteemed writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was in this manner that I got to know him and love him. In some way, known only to himself, he had secured Boswell's own copy of the first edition of his life of Johnson; the copy Boswell had used for corrections for the second edition. It was my first big step in Johnsoniana, and, by gad, I've spent my life in being grateful to Kenyon for having convinced me that my collection would never be important without it."

Cheney noticed that when he had mentioned the Boswell my eyes had glanced towards the case on the right.

"Yes, that was the copy you saw when you first came in.

"But to resume where I left off. Kenyon never married, and as his business prospered and expanded he desired and sought the company of book-lovers, the companionships of men whose tastes were like his own. In those days there were no clubs of book-lovers and he was forced to use these rooms as a gathering-place where they would not be interrupted by others. It began by his inviting us one by one to dine with him."

A chuckle escaped his lips.

"He had an idea that Dickens was all-encompassing in life. The realism of Dickens, the lovable old fool would argue, was great enough for a man to guide his life by. I might admit such a thing about Johnson, sir, but Dickens? Never! However, he would invite us to a dinner conceived by Dickens and executed by himself. Wine always, a roast of beef and pie. Believe me, sir, when I say that there was no difference at all in those meals and the meals you would be served with at a second-rate dining-room to-day. Take Johnson now,

he loved boiled leg of lamb and veal pie. Who to-day ever eats boiled leg of lamb?

"The only difference was in the matter of service. Kenyon would don on such occasions the clothes of the period of 1848 and in his stiff, Victorian manner order the service. It was not so much his foolish meal but his amiable conversation. He knew as much of Johnson as I did, but he was too fine a host to let me think he did.

"There was Matthews, the collector of Thackeray." He said this in a way that expressed supreme contempt. "How can a man collect anyone so dull and uninteresting as Thackeray? Well, Matthews, one day, came in great glee to tell me of a Dickensian dinner he had had at Kenyon's. He insisted a man might be able to get a good dinner out of the works of Thackeray —but I snorted and left him to rave by himself. You couldn't find a decent meal in all the collected and fugitive writings of that fellow. Another day came Greene, who told me of his experiences at Kenyon's table. Greene collected Browning. A man with an imagination might, with great diligence, scrape together sustenance from Thackeray or almost any other writer, but Browning must have thrived on air. Never a bit of real eating is mentioned. Or, am I wrong? I confess I've never read a word of his, but I never heard of a palatable dish mentioned by Browning."

I smiled at the intolerance of this old collector but I took care he did not see it. I was slightly startled by a voice that came from the rear asking if dinner should be served.

"Right now, Francis," ordered my host. "By gad, sir, you shall see a meal from the works of Samuel Johnson. We'll have it on Dickens's desk solely because the Great Cham's table still rests in London. I'll have it yet to eat a Johnsonian meal from.

"Kenyon's idea started a fad. Matthews gave it impetus and the first thing we knew it became a regular Thursday feature. A collector would assemble the best dinner he could from the writings of his favourite author, or one that the author had preferred to all others, and invite his friends to it. It is a remarkable fact, though, that only customers of Kenyon's shop were invited to these dinners. Curious, wasn't it, but we knew it was due to the bookseller's personality. He had welded us together into a solidly knit unit with similar yet diverse tastes.

"Kenyon's name became a synonym for success. His honesty and integrity made his shop the goal of all book-lovers. Old Christie, then of Crother's Auction Rooms, you know him, he had his own shop until his recent death, was a leading spirit, and so was old Jaye Johnstone, who loved Charles Lamb with a love that approached idolatry. There were others, names I have forgotten and which would mean nothing to a youngster like yourself. It was around Kenyon's shop and personality they gathered and many of them owed their collections to his zeal. Indeed, he had more collectors to his credit than a minister had converts.

"'Why first editions?' he would exclaim. 'Why any books at all? Why bread and butter? Why life? Not that I mean first editions and association copies are as important as these things. Man is not content with bread and butter alone, nor just with life. He wants other foods and other lives than the everyday ones. Just as he seeks different dishes for his table, different clothes for his family and person, so does he seek his favourite author in a dress that is uncommon. If you truly love an author's works you want them as he wrote them and not as ill-advised friends suggested. Laugh, if you will, but these are things for the soul and are quite as important as a new dress for the woman you love.'

"Time and again I have heard him argue with a reluctant book-lover. He never spoke to the same man twice on that subject. Either they left feeling him to be a fool or they came back to look over some rare editions of their author."

"A great man to be able to do that," I agreed. "I wish he were alive to convince my family that I am not totally insane."

"Not Kenyon. He would make his appeal to you whom he knew and let you settle with your family.

"His business in rarities gradually crowded out the remnants of his other lines and his shop was frequented only by collectors with definite needs and a fair knowledge of what they wanted.

"Kenyon's life was bounded by the four walls of his shop and these rooms: his companions were the collectors, who were welcome for as long as they cared to remain. The outside world saw little of him save on Sundays, when he would don his best and walk to Fifth Avenue and up to the park, returning later by the old horse-drawn

buses. The mob must have considered him ridiculous in his tight-fitting trousers with the straps under the insteps, the cutaway coat, the lacy stock and the modified beaver. To us, who saw him only in his shop or in these rooms, he was not queer. His apple-red cheeks and his snow-white hair, with the pink skin showing through, belied the years he had spent between book-shelves. There was something in his life that had kept him young, something we did not know about."

"Cherchez la femme," I suggested.

"No such thing. We will come to that later. When he was about sixty-five a group of business men, deciding America was on the verge of a great book-buying epoch, came to him with an offer for his shop and goodwill. Modern business methods, you understand. It is no longer the rule to begin at the bottom and work up. Nowadays you form a corporation to take over the business of someone at the top of the ladder. Very often you find that at the top there is no way but down. Kenyon considered the problem for some time before he made up his mind. The offer was a good one: it meant a large sum of cash and a fairish amount of stock in the new organisation. They told him quite frankly that all they wanted was his name and his goodwill, but that for their own protection they would buy the stock also. He must, on his part, agree not to re-enter the book business."

I suddenly became conscious that someone was behind me. Cheney, at that moment, broke in with:

"Right here, Parker."

A coloured servant spread a white cloth over Dickens's table and laid the silver.

"This," said my host, "is dish for dish the same that Samuel Johnson served to his friend Boswell on the occasion of their first dining at Johnson's Court. It, too, was served by a Francis Parker. May we hope that the spirit of the Great Cham is with us during its progress."

The last words were said almost in the voice of a minister of the gospel asking grace. The eating of the dinner did not interrupt his narrative.

"Thursday was our night to dine at his place. On the Thursday of which I am speaking there was nothing untoward in the proceedings: the conversation of Kenyon was just as animated as ever. Wine preceded the dinner while we were still grouped about the fireplace. Then we sat down to one of those Dickensian dinners we had learned to love so well. When the last lips had been wiped by the last napkin Kenyon held up his hand. The servant refilled the glasses and he announced that to-day was the fortieth anniversary of his shop and asked us to drink to its continued success. We arose and after drinking gave him three rousing cheers. Not a man there really believed that forty years had passed since he began business. Of all present Matthews had known him the longest, and later he told us he could remember first entering the shop some thirty-seven years before. The man at the head of the table seemed too young for such a long experience, too hale and hearty for all the sixty-five years he boasted. Our chattering was silenced by another raising of his hand. He then announced the sale of his business.

"Can you recall, in your very young life, the emotion on learning that some great and beloved belief was wrecked? The effect on the little group that sat about his table was greater than if the sentence of death had been passed on each one. For a few tense moments we sat without moving.

"It was Matthews who jumped up and said that if it were a matter of money—— No, it wasn't money.

"Then bedlam broke loose. We protested. It was unheard of. Kenyon's with Kenyon in command to pass out of our lives? It might have given some of our womenfolks great pleasure but there was no joy in that little group. We protested and argued. Alternate plans that would keep him in the shop were suggested. All Kenyon would say was he was sorry but he had had the matter under consideration for over a year and he wanted his freedom. The shop would pass to the new owners within the month but the rooms would remain his property and these dinners could continue.

"Kenyon lifted his wine to his lips. Rising to his feet, he replied in his graceful fashion telling us how much the demonstration had meant to him. Early in the evening he had hoped that the simple announcement of his retirement would be sufficient. Then he went on to give us his reason. I can't give it to you in his words nor can I ape his style.

"His father had been the respected agent of an English woollen manufacturing house with offices in New York. It was his custom to make yearly trips to the

London office, and when little Edwin Kenyon was eight years old he accompanied his father on one of these trips. Business that usually consumed the better part of a month was completed in a fortnight and father and son spent the days sightseeing. One day, while walking in the Strand, they were hailed by a young man with rather long hair and dressed in velvet outer garments. The young man had cried excitedly, 'See, Maclise, it is little Paul Dombey come to life. We must have them to lunch.' The young man presented his card to the astonished father and then introduced his friend. They were Charles Dickens and Daniel Maclise, the artist. All this was beyond the ken of little Kenyon, and his father explained to him that Mr. Dickens was a great man and it was quite an honour to be invited to his home.

"Once within the walls of Dickens's house, the great writer's enthusiasm knew no bounds. He rushed for a copy of his latest work, *Dombey and Son*, and reading from descriptive passages asked his friend to witness the fact that Little Edwin was the incarnation of his character of little Paul Dombey. The description, Maclise agreed, fitted the lad perfectly, and the overjoyed Dickens wanted to take the lad around to meet Forster, who thought the picture overdrawn. Giving the lad a copy of the book, he asked him to read a passage so that he might determine if the voices were the same. Alas, the poor lad was so flustered he was unable to read. Dickens misunderstood the boy's shyness as an inability to read the more difficult words and asked the senior Kenyon would he not bring the boy back the next day.

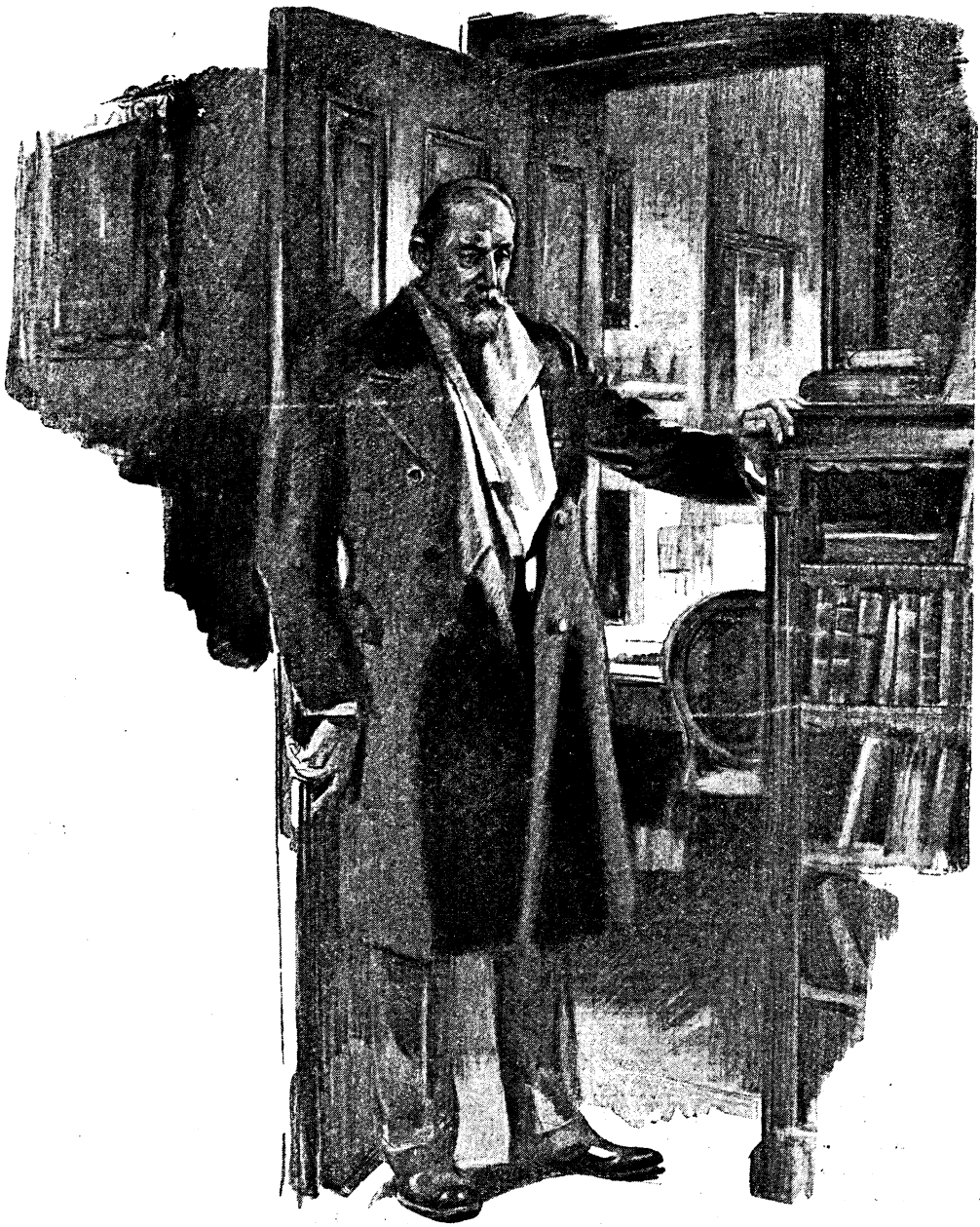
"The second day was much more than a repetition of the first. About the table were gathered Macready, Forster, Sergeant Talfourd, the inevitable Maclise, and others. The luncheon wound up by Dickens presenting to Edwin Kenyon a copy of *Dombey and Son* in which all the words too difficult for young heads were made simple. So great were the changes that every page showed numerous interlineations in the author's holograph. On the title-page was inscribed 'Little Dombey's own copy from his friend,' and here followed in graceful flourish 'Charles Dickens.' The two amazed Americans left promising they would return the following year.

"There was no next trip. Business, due to the financial conditions in 1849, was so bad that Kenyon senior had to forego his trip. In 1850 the firm failed and Kenyon's father, deeply involved and broken in health, never recovered. After his death his widow remarried and at sixteen Edwin Kenyon was apprenticed to a New York bookseller. During the events leading up to his apprenticeship his copy of *Dombey and Son* had been lost. During his fifty years in the book business he had searched high and low for the book but had not found it. Every book, he maintained, returned again and again to the stalls, and, even then, it must lie in some shop unknown to the proprietor. He had ascertained that it was in none of the great collections, public or private. Being free of the shop would give him more opportunities to seek in those fields that remained unexplored: the dirty little shops that infested the side streets of New York.

"Book-collectors are selfish. Even after this confession many were loath to let him go on with his announced intentions. There were many little gaps in their own collections which needed filling, and only Kenyon could fill them. Old Christie, who, next to Kenyon, was the greatest man I ever knew, and still is, for that matter, made an appropriate speech. He made several suggestions, one of which was that we resolve ourselves into a searching party and help Kenyon locate his book. Then, to keep on with the good work already begun, he proposed that we continue to meet here every Thursday evening and enjoy the company of the greatest bookseller who ever lived. Then he called for a toast to the everlasting success of 'Little Dombey, a name, gentlemen, that is more appropriate than the one God gave him and the one by which, it is my earnest hope, Mr. Kenyon will henceforth be known to the members of this group and to this group alone. Let it be our password.'

"Old Christie's wish became our law and the name of Little Dombey has outlasted that of Edwin Payson Kenyon.

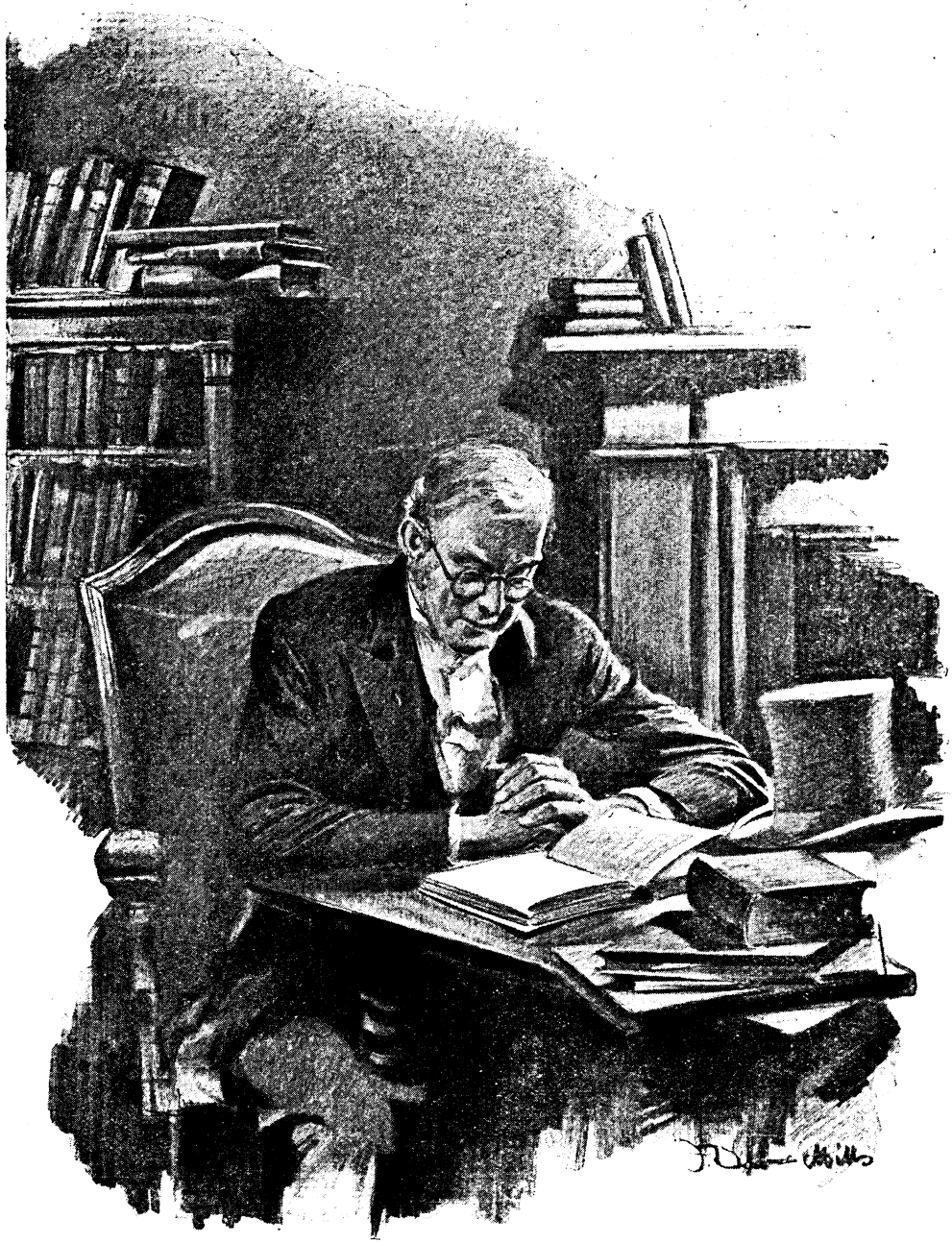
"To get back to Kenyon. From that time we saw little of him. True, he was present at our weekly dinners, but it was a different Kenyon; in fact, it wasn't Kenyon at all. Kenyon was a bookseller, our bookseller. Kenyon's was a book-shop and still was a book-shop. It had been moved over to the more fashionable Union Square, and the books that had been shelved in our shop were now known as an old and rare department. For us Kenyon and Kenyon's had passed. We had lost our



bookseller but had gained a greater collector than any of us.

"Kenyon had changed in more ways than merely his cognomen. He daily dressed in his best; I think it was Old Christie who insisted that he read Dickens to his tailor and then insisted upon being dressed after the fashion of Dombey senior. Save for the weekly meeting, he had lost touch with us and his former interest in our collections had given way to an acceptance of his position as a fellow-collector. Where before he had been the guiding spirit he became but one of ourselves. Old Christie, still a comparatively young man, that is, he was younger than myself and much younger than Little Dombey, became the active leader. Little Dombey sat at the head of the table and officiated, but Old Christie, considering his connection with Crother's, had the conversational edge due to his knowledge of our most recent acquisi-

tions. Little Dombey each year took on more and more the appearance of a venerated and superannuated patriarch.



"Closing time found him still deep in his book."

"He would be found at times grubbing through piles of dusty books in the rear of some filthy book-shop, poring over the top shelves from the highest step of a ladder, or begging a cheap, ready-money bookseller's permission to explore his cellar. That the book was still in existence he was certain. It was to be found only through perseverance. Were he a modern collector he would have called his agents provocateurs and sent them hither and thither: he would

have said 'Find,' and they would have found and brought to him the thing of his desire. But he was a collector of the old school who did his own collecting and got real joy in doing it. He knew, better than anyone else, that the collector is at heart an idealist who is searching for some great object and that his strength comes from the hunt. Possession was the reward of the hunt, the brush, so to speak. To have a much-desired item presented to him by an agent would, he felt, have been robbing him of the chase.

"His search carried him everywhere. From time to time he would bring us little trophies he had found in his hunt: little items that helped make our own collections richer. When we offered to pay him liberally he would laugh and tell us he had picked it from a stand for a dime. He may have been aging, but his eyes were still sharper than ours.

"Little Dombey's days began with a perusal of his mail. It must have been prodigious. He was in active touch with all the booksellers of the world: their catalogues came to him as issued. Old Christie, after he had relinquished control of Crother's, had opened a shop wherein he held auction sales—little cheap, 'take it for cash' sales that were not at all in accord with the class of business he conducted. Auction fever must be a terrible thing: I cannot tell, for I never could endure them.

"One morning towards the end of the season a catalogue came to him from Old Christie's with the legend 'marked copy' stamped on its label. When he opened it he found written on the cover 'See page 16, item number 182.' Turning to the page indicated he found a brief description of his long-lost book.

"If you should come to me and poke under my nose a very rare and desirable piece of Johnsoniana and give me five minutes to decide whether I would purchase it or not, I might inquire the price and, if it were within reach of my purse, take it, but that is the way of the housewife with her greengrocer. After I had purchased the item you had forced upon me I would probably find I did not want it at any price, or that I had overestimated my purse. Such is the way of auctions. One gets their catalogues a week in advance of the sale; there is no indication of the prices the books will bring. There are the price guides and market values of many of the better-known rarities, but if two rich fools come to arms over the same item the true collector may as well pick up his hat and leave; there is nothing in the law to prevent two such men from raising the price to an unheard-of level. God only is their judge: we book-lovers must be the witnesses of their folly.

"The morning that Little Dombey got his catalogue there was no notable change in his procedure. He dressed as carefully as ever and, grasping his stick, he tapped the top of his beaver and was off to Old Christie's, the mid-Victorian gallant to the end. He was just as chipper when he entered the auction rooms as he was the day he was twenty-one. Whatever his emotions were I cannot tell. I had this part of the story from Old Christie himself. He may have been younger but he never was happier.

"He found the books to be sold at auction neatly arranged in the rolling bookcases. Number 182 was missing. Summoning an attendant, he inquired its location. Yes, Number 182 was in the rooms but was in the safe. Too valuable to place in an unguarded case. Far too valuable, thought Little Dombey, but not for his hands, the hands in which the book had been placed some seventy years previously by the God-blessed writer himself. The book was brought to him and placed again in his hands while the attendant stood watchfully by.

"Yes, it was his book, the selfsame copy, with the inscription and all the emendations. Old Christie came up from behind and whispered:

"'Your copy, I believe, sir. Little Dombey's own copy I read on the title-page.'

"'My copy it is,' echoed Little Dombey.

"'I tried to purchase it to your account outside the rooms. An estate, you see, and the executors, realising the worth of the book, insisted on a public sale so that it might bring the highest price.'

"Yes, it was his book. A little the worse for wear but like an old friend capable of standing a lot more wear. He took a chair near by and began reading. Old Christie motioned the attendant away and let it be understood that Mr. Kenyon was not to be disturbed. There he sat the best part of the day lost in the pages of his book; reading the words he thought had been seared in his mind. Their freshness amazed him, as did the art with which

the author had simplified the words for his young mind.

"Closing time found him still deep in his book. The working force of Christie's silently tiptoed out as if they were leaving the sacred presence. At last only Little Dombey remained, Little Dombey and Old Christie. Old Christie was a bookman of the old school. He recognised the great thrill of a real collector and respected it. He had experienced the same thrill and knew in his heart of hearts he was witnessing a phenomenon that was fast disappearing before the approach of modern business . . . disappearing because modern business demanded action and speed and profit. Sentiment was ruinous. Mass production: big sales and small profits. Organised selling. No place for sentiment. Sentiment was for women and they were fast ridding themselves of the curse. Every modern element was at work to destroy the emotions that Little Dombey was experiencing.

"There was no suggestion that closing time had passed, such as happened at Caulfield's this evening. Old Christie would have sat the night out had it been necessary rather than disturb Little Dombey. It was not necessary: Little Dombey came to with a start and, looking at his watch, discovered it was late and recalled that he had been without food since breakfast. He asked Old Christie had he any idea the price the book would bring.

"'Hard telling, my dear friend. When you lost it it was worth, say, ten dollars at the most. To-day—well, there is no other piece of Dickensiana to compare it with save a manuscript. It is worth all it will bring, which I estimate will be about a thousand dollars.'

"Your bookseller of the old school could not tell his friend he had an unlimited bid from an out-of-town customer. That would have been unethical. It was not unethical, however, for Old Christie to write a letter to the bidder and tell him that, should another such bid come in, the price he would have to pay would be left to the discretion of the auctioneer, who might take such an opportunity to boost his own stock by making the bidder pay an unheard-of price.

"Little Dombey returned home as one in a dream. A thousand dollars was well within his limit; he would pay ten times that sum to regain possession of the book that belonged to him.

"His search ended, as he thought, he returned to his rooms and began making preparations for the return of the book. There would be a dinner such as the club had never known. Wine, from a cellar that had existed long before we were born, was brought out. The time until Thursday, the day of the sale, was spent in preparing for the event, which I can assure you, Gregory, was to be a gala one. Little Dombey had to this end secured, during his years of search, items of intimate importance to all of us. Beside each plate was to be placed a gift for each member. You can judge, my dear Gregory, what it meant to us when I tell you that that night I ate from the very plate, sir, that Sam Johnson had eaten from when he dined at Mrs. Thrale's. For Matthews there was an original sketch by Thackeray, and in front of Old Christie's plate was a copy of the catalogue of the auction sale of the library of Joseph Addison, together with an old hand-bill advertising the date and place of the sale. The gifts for the other members were of equal importance and interest.

"Sam Johnson said, 'panting time toileth after him in vain.' Thursday, the day of the sale, must have travelled with laggard feet for Little Dombey. Just as Judgment Day is promised and will eventually arrive, so did the day of the sale.

"The usual clan was gathered about the rostrum of the auctioneer. The sale was already under way when I entered. Before I could find a seat Old Christie called me to one side and told me that the unlimited bid had been withdrawn and replaced with one of seven hundred and fifty dollars. Then he went on to outline a plan to which I agreed.

"To me auctions are stupid affairs. The auctioneer droned on with his interminable bids of any amount from twenty-five cents to five dollars. A flick of a catalogue, the lifting of a finger, the winking of an eye might mean a dollar or it might mean a hundred dollars. The freemasonry of the sales-room is beyond my ken.

"Number 182 came to the block at last. There was a visible tightening of nerves among the members of the club who were present. Little Dombey alone was calm. Only a person who was seated in front of him could have seen the sparkle in his eyes, the flicker of a smile that played about the corners of his mouth.

"'The next item,' announced the auctioneer, 'is a choice one. It is an association copy which I consider of great value.

If you will look at your catalogue you will see that it is a presentation copy of the first edition of *Dombey and Son* with a very intimate inscription in the holograph of Charles Dickens. Many have heard of the existence of this book but regarded it as a fable. In addition the book shows numerous corrections in the author's handwriting. I expect it to bring a very high price. Gentlemen, Number 182 is on the block. What is your pleasure? May I start the bidding at one thousand dollars? Five hundred? No offers? May I ask for a bid of one hundred dollars? Can't I get an offer of one hundred dollars for this unique piece of Dickensiana?'

"Little Dombey must have suspected a deep-laid plot for no one to register any bids that it might be knocked down to him at a very low cost. The thought was insulting. But the auctioneer was not a party to such a plot.

"'May I begin it with a bid of one dollar?' he asked contemptuously. 'Thank you, Mr. Granger. Gentlemen, I have a bid of one dollar for this priceless item. One dollar—thank you, Mr. Adams. I have one hundred dollars! Fifty! Two hundred! Fifty! Three hundred! Fifty! Four hundred! Five hundred. Five hundred! The bid is against you, Mr. Adams. Thank you, six hundred! Seven hundred! Eight! Nine! Nine! Ten! We are progressing. The bid is again against you, Mr. Adams. You are finished. I have an offer of eleven hundred dollars. Can I get twelve?'

"At this point Little Dombey entered the lists. 'Twelve hundred, twelve—Thirteen hundred! Fourteen hundred! Fifteen hundred!'

"Then an unheard-of thing happened. The auctioneer ceased his soliciting of bids and, looking at Little Dombey, said, 'I'm sorry, Mr. Kenyon, but I feel that I must inform you that I have an unlimited bid on the book and any amount you offer will be topped. The item on sale is worth a thousand dollars: I see no reason why our client whose name I cannot divulge should be forced to pay more than fifteen hundred. I will sell Number 182 for fifteen hundred dollars to a customer who wishes to remain unknown.'

"In the few minutes it took the auctioneer to make these remarks I saw a man aged to the fullest of his years. The rosy cheeks went white, the little tufts of white hair lost their crispness. He rose from his chair and stumbled out of the room a defeated and beaten man.

"I don't know where he went. Later in the evening we gathered around the table expecting to find him here. The usual hour passed without any sign of him. We became worried when we found, too, that Old Christie was among the missing. The table was ready and we should have gone on with the dinner, yet there we stood about the fireplace.

"About nine-thirty Old Christie came in, leading a very old man. He was led to the head of the table and silently took his seat. As he glanced at his plate he saw there the book he had devoted his life to searching for. The club had been the unknown bidder. What we thought was a magnificent gesture turned out to be a pitiful trick on an old man.

"He regained a lot of his customary cheerfulness as the dinner progressed. The wine spurred him on to tell of the unusual things that had happened to him during his years of search. It was not Kenyon, the bookseller, nor Little Dombey, the collector, who was talking. It was a man who bore their likeness, who knew their ways about the world, but it was another man. To this day I do not know whether it was the book or the club that was to blame.

"After that great day he went into a decline. His life-work was finished, his collection completed. A marvellous man in life, he was no less remarkable in death. After the funeral, when his will was read, it was found that he had left these rooms and his collection to the group. He suggested that the rooms be used to house the collections of all the members and eventually a way would be found to make them available to every collector. The only other condition was that the property should not be sold for profit.

"We held a meeting and agreed that Little Dombey's proposal was a good one. The collections were moved in and placed in separate cases as you see them to-night. It was further agreed that each member leave his collection to the group and the last surviving member should decide on the ultimate disposal."

Cheney's chin dropped to his breast.

"I am the last surviving member."

"What do you intend doing with the collections?" I asked. "Who will you leave them to?"

"Until to-night I was undecided. To place them in a public place would be

to place them before unappreciative eyes. To found a special library would only mean burying them in a mausoleum with a fossoyeur in charge. To-night, while we were at Caulfield's, I came to the conclusion the problem was too great a one for me to solve, and to let someone else decide. There must be enough real collectors left to appreciate and care for such a collection, and, if they are willing to conform to Little Dombey's bequest, there is no reason why they should not continue along the established lines and continue the Thursday evening dinners."

My heart fell. His dislike for R. L. S. would keep me out of the new group. In my mind I began seeking a means of entrance. Before I could formulate a plan of attack that would admit Stevenson and myself:

"By the way," his voice had the old cheerful ring to it, "do you think you could get a decent meal out of Stevenson's works?"

MARCH.

WHERE gusty March's
Dog mercury grows
Plumes on the larches
Have deepened to rose,
Hail-stones come scudding
Hard over the hill,
Gold gorses budding
Their honey cups fill.

March—how he rollicks!
Dust, tempest or snows
Which be his frolics
No wiseacre knows;
Yet is he kindly
For since he has been
Blustering blindly
The copses are green.

Violets greet him,
Pale primroses cheer,
Daffodils meet him
Ablow by the mere,
Bumble bees hustle
Composing a song,
All's in a bustle,
And Spring won't be long.

MAY I. E. DOLPHIN.



"Their host called for a maid, and a slatternly girl appeared, who sullenly escorted the visitor along the dim passage."

JUSTICE

By JOYCE E. J. COLLARD

ILLUSTRATED BY TOM PEDDIE

SOMEONE was knocking on the door of the "Red Cow."

The sound reverberated through the silent alehouse, and raised echoes in deserted rooms and rat-haunted cellars below ground-level. The rotting timbers of the door, once part of some stout wind-jammer, shook as the impatient hand thundered upon them once more, and Mr. Porter, roused from his midday slumbers in the dusty bar, and removing the handkerchief which had covered his face, lurched along the passage, down some of the stairs which sprang up in every corner to trip the unwary, and finally unlatched the door.

It swung back on grinding hinges, and the musty air of the inn was met by a gust of raw wind and a cloud of dust that swept up Anchor and Hope Alley from the wharves below. The road was deserted save for the two travellers who awaited admission, but curious faces were to be seen at most of the lattices in the tumble-down houses which huddled in a straggling line on either side of the cobbles, and in the distance could be heard the muffled thunder of carts and coaches on some busy thoroughfare.

The innkeeper rubbed the sleep from his bleared eyes, and stared down at the two who had waked him at an hour when the place was usually deserted. The woman who had knocked was tall and finely built, and upon her arm leant a gaunt, bent man; a forbidding figure in a trailing cloak, and a

dark hat pulled far over his face. He started when Mr. Porter addressed them, but did not speak, and the woman briefly explained their wants. Mr. Porter led them into the bar, where the woman seated the man in a dark corner, and after a whispered word or two, asked if a tankard of beer could be drawn for him; then she requested that she might be shown to some less public room, where she could rest. Their host called for a maid, and a slatternly girl appeared, who sullenly escorted the visitor along the dim passage and into a room which looked out on the street. The traveller thanked her, and, directly she was alone, cast off her cloak and hood and sank into the nearest chair with closed eyes.

She pushed the hair back from her throbbing forehead with a sigh of relief, and for some time sat motionless, listening to the unfamiliar noises of the old house, and the occasional beat of feet on the stones outside. She wondered vaguely about the identity of the people to whom those passing footsteps belonged—what were their errands, what had their lives been, who were their lovers and their enemies. . . . None, she felt certain, had a past more bitter and strange than she and her companion in the room beyond, and none looked to a future more unsure.

The sounds gradually died away; even the strident voice of some boy in the yard behind the inn ceased at last, and a drowsy silence fell, only broken by the intermittent buzz of a fly on the window-panes, and the rhythmic thudding of an unlatched door somewhere above. She dozed and almost fell asleep, but suddenly a sound roused her again, and for some unaccountable reason her heart began to beat furiously. It was the noise of footsteps padding unevenly along the street, as if their owner was anxious to place his feet where they would be as noiseless as possible. A dark form loomed up against the window and paused there an instant, then moved on, and the soft steps ceased. The front door creaked and closed quietly, someone was feeling his way down the corridor, there came a furtive hand on the latch outside the room where she sat listening, then the door slowly opened and a man peered in.

She sprang to her feet and the intruder paused, with an apology for disturbing her.

"I thought the room was empty," he explained. "But you will not mind if I wait here a few minutes? I find the landlord has gone out, but I want to see him before I engage my rooms."

His voice was harsh and resonant, and it was obviously difficult to him to maintain a quiet tone. At his first words the woman started, but stood quite still until he had finished speaking; then she gently assured him that he might wait without inconveniencing her. She sank into the chair again, and, as he seated himself by the table, gave him a furtive glance, and presently an open stare.

He was of medium height, and wore a rusty coat and fur cap, but despite this and the seaman's neckcloth around his throat, there was an air of dignity about him which fitted poorly with his costume and stealthy behaviour. Her burning eyes travelled over his face and noted the lines of ill health or dissipation which marred it—the cruel curl of his well-cut lips, the hard glint in his eyes as he glanced through a bundle of papers and letters, and the strange absence of any line where his eyebrows should have been. Her wan face grew paler as she peered through the gloom of the little room, and all at once she rose, and, taking a rushlight from the mantelpiece, placed it on the table at his side.

"It's too dark for you to see to read, sir," she said, and there was a tremble of excitement in her low voice. "Here's a tinder box—there, that's better."

The candle flared up and he moved back irritably. "I want no lights—it's only midday . . ." He broke off and his eyes travelled uneasily towards the window.

"Yes, but we're into December now, and London seems a dark place to me," she answered.

Steps were heard again in the street, and he rose and crossed to the window, then drew back as a crowd of sailors went by. One of them, seeing the light, glanced in as he passed, and the man inside twitched the curtains together with averted head before returning to his chair.

"You come from the country?" he queried, obviously only for the sake of breaking the heavy silence.

"Yes—from Somerset."

"Eh? Somerset?" He turned his keen eyes on her for the first time.

"But we've left it for good, my husband and I."

"Oh, your husband—is he here?"

"In the room beyond." She re-seated herself, and volunteered more information. "We're waiting here till the tide turns."

"Then you've taken passage——?"

"On one of the ships at King Edward's

Stairs. They put our luggage aboard, but told us we must wait an hour on shore, so we thought we'd better spend the time at the nearest tavern."

He smiled mirthlessly. "No, you're right there, I expect, though I can't say I know that part."

"Don't you, sir?"



"The door slowly opened and a man peered in."

"I see. And you're deserting England?"

"Yes. Somerset isn't the place it was four years ago."

Her voice was expressionless, but his gaze dropped, and he muttered a curt negative as though desirous of ending the conversation. There was silence for some minutes, then all

at once the wind rose and the old house seemed to rock under the onslaught. It came roaring down the wide chimney, and the rushlight began to gutter, throwing fantastic shadows across the man's face. A gust of rain spattered on the window-panes, and the woman laughed curiously.

" I never hear rain like that but it reminds me of the kettle-drums—and the beating of them one grey Sunday morning—in Bridgwater——"

It might only have been an effect of the candle-light, but there seemed to be a sudden flicker of fear in his eyes. " You're speaking of the traitor Monmouth's time ? "

She nodded. " My husband was one of those lads who marched out to the drums. . . ."



He moved restlessly. "You're bold, woman, to confess it to a stranger."

"But we're rebels no longer, sir, since Prince William landed."

"Why leave the country, then?"

"It was too late to alter our plans; I've an uncle in Bremen expecting us, and besides, I want to get my husband away—it's the—the associations—they nearly craze him." She stumbled over the words, then spoke rapidly. "I'd like to tell you our story, sir. It will—amuse you, while you wait."

He grunted unamiably, but she went on before he could demur.

"We've come from down Taunton way. My Dick and his young brother ran their farm together, and Dick and I were tokened and meant to get married when he'd saved up . . . but all that was before the trouble began. They both went to fight for King Monmouth, and were caught and kept prisoned till Judge Jeffreys and the Special Commission came to try them. Dick they sentenced to be transported to Barbadoes, but his brother they condemned, because they'd caught him with the Duke's colours. I was there in the court-house, and Dick had to stand by and hear that young boy sentenced—but I'll not repeat the horrors they said. They wouldn't even let Dick bid him good-bye, and that lad had been like a son to him ever since they were left orphaned."

"Who were the judges?" asked her listener.

"Lord Jeffreys and Mr. Baron Wright—'Jeffreys Echo' they used to call him. The other three judges had gone on to Wells to open the Assizes there. I heard that if you could find enough money it was possible to buy pardons for those they'd marked off for transportation. I found out how much was needed, and although I'd only a fortnight, I got it."

"How?"

"You'd best not ask that."

There was a moment's silence, then she continued tensely: "I went with the money and saw Mr. Justice Wythens himself, and he promised that Dick should be freed, but I was such a fool that in my joy I never bargained how it should be done, or when or where. They let him out; oh yes, they showed me his prison papers, but he just disappeared, sir, and not a man of them knew where—or would speak if they did know. But I wouldn't give up hope, and I wouldn't believe what they hinted—that he'd made away with himself. No, that wasn't the way my man would take to get out of his troubles. So I just went on searching—every alehouse and hedge-tavern where a penniless man might look for shelter, for I knew he'd not leave the neighbourhood, even though they'd gutted his farm. For a month I walked every alley and backyard in Taunton—filthy places I never knew existed before——"

"And you found him?"

"In a cellar down by the river, starving and crippled with ague—he who'd always stood as straight as one of his corn-stalks. He was half crazed, and no wonder, sitting there with the wash of the water always in his ears and a circle of rats round him."

For the first time her lips quivered, but her hearer was staring fixedly at the table in front of him, and did not raise his head even when she rose and moved softly towards the door. Standing by it, she resumed her tale.

"Well, I won't weary you with much more, sir, but I must just tell you how it is we're here. I nursed him for three long years, doing odd work by day when the neighbours would watch him, and looking after him myself by night—the nights were always the worst. A couple of months ago he seemed to come back to himself, though he'll never be the man he was. When he could bear to talk and discuss things, he was all for getting away from Somerset—the least thing down there was enough to remind him and torture him all over again. So we're going to Bremen—it's near Hamburg, you know—and some day, please God, he'll learn to forget."

"You married him?"

"A week ago. He wasn't fit to think out anything for himself until just lately, and I'd lost my good name already, so I didn't care—much."

She began to fumble in the ample pocket which swung from her belt, but did not pause in her narrative.

"He told me what happened when they'd had the money for him, and brought him from the gaol up before one of the judges—he'd never say which, for fear I'd be off to put a knife into him—and so I would, too, if I knew which of them it was."

"What was this judge's crime, then?" The man was drumming nervously on the table with one lean hand.

"He bade the officer free my man in the Market Place at midday. Dick says he hopes he didn't know what was going on there at that hour, but I don't believe that—he knew well enough, the devil!"

The other interrupted her brusquely.

"Well, it's a sad story, but you're not the only sufferers for that rotten cause, I fear."

"Wait a moment, I haven't finished yet!"

Her voice rang out harshly, and she took a step towards him and emphasised each word that followed. "They were hanging rebels on the gallows in the Market Place when they brought Dick there, and they wouldn't let him go till he had seen—his brother—his own brother, I tell you——"

The man half rose from his chair.

"Yes, yes, woman. But why tell *me* all this rigmarole?"

She threw back her head arrogantly.

"Because it pleases me—*George Jeffreys.*"

At the same instant she whipped a pistol from her pocket and levelled it at his head.

There was a long pause, while the colour slowly drained away from his flushed face, leaving it grey and lined. He sat still, gazing at her, and at last spoke, in a small, thin voice.

"What do you mean to do?"

All her vehemence seemed to have gone and she answered gravely: "Is there any reason why I shouldn't give you up to Justice?"

"Don't—do that," he said thickly.

"Why not? There are a dozen constables at search for you here in Wapping. Oh yes, it leaked out yesterday that you had fled after your—master."

He seemed to have difficulty in finding words, but at last muttered: "Let me go. I only want to get abroad—I swear I'll not meddle with politics again."

"I wonder how many poor rebels have said those very words to you?"

He cried passionately: "I never refused to hear them!"

"But they always pleaded *in vain.* Remember, my lord, I attended your court at Taunton."

"I was in bodily agony—the malady I suffered——"

"*They* were in agony of mind and soul."

He defended himself hoarsely. "I only did my King's bidding—nay, I was reproved later for being too lenient."

"Did your King bid you kill a child of twelve by the sheer fury of your words?"

He blanched at that. "Woman, can't you understand my position? I was brought up to hate Dissenters for hypocrites who made their religion a cloak for their treason. I was trained to question and try men——"

"And *always* to find them guilty?"

He turned on her fiercely. "I'll not plead for mercy to you!" he cried, and then dropped his head on to his outstretched arms with a gesture of utter despair. She stood for some moments regarding him, then seemed to make up her mind.

"My lord, you need not convince me. It is another who shall try you and pass sentence on you—my husband, whom you condemned to a living death, and whose only brother you hanged."

She backed towards the door, opened it with her left hand, and calling to the maid whom she could hear moving about in the bar, asked her to bring her husband to her; but she kept the pistol steadily trained on her prisoner until shuffling steps came down the passage, and only moved away from the door when their owner stumbled in. He stood still in the doorway, a tall man with the remnants of a fine physique about him, but his head was bowed and his hair prematurely white, and the bold features of his face were marred by a strip of black silk bound across where his eyes should have been.

Jeffreys uttered a stifled exclamation, and the woman spoke quietly.

"Yes, he's blind, sir." She turned to her husband. "Dick, this gentleman is interested in our troubles—tell him how it happened."

He stood nervously plucking at the strip of silk. "I'm afraid my wife's been wearying you with our tale, sir," he began haltingly. "But if you want to know, they blinded me when I saw my brother—it wasn't that he didn't keep a stout heart, sir—I only hope I'll do as well when my time comes . . . but I couldn't forbear crying out——"

Something about his listener's silence, or his wife's agitation, seemed to strike him, and he turned his head restlessly.

"Rachel—who is it?"

She answered gently, as one would to a child. "Dear, it is a fugitive, someone who is being hunted for through London. He has disguised himself, but I recognised his voice—and I think you will remember it, too."

His pallid face flushed painfully. "You mean—it is——?"

Jeffreys rose suddenly and thrust back his chair. "It is the Lord Chancellor of England, and you detain him at your peril!"

"Don't move again—I still have you covered!" The woman's voice came warningly, and he stood still, biting his lip.

The blind man half smiled. "Where is

the Seal of your Office now, my lord?"

Jeffreys threw up his head. "Oh, don't bait me with that, man, but for God's sake tell your wife to let me go."

"To let you go?" He mused over the words and all they had once meant to him, and the woman spoke decisively.



"It is for you to say what's to be done, Dick. Speak the word, and I'll raise the alarm—we'll soon have the best-hated man in England clapped in gaol."

"Wait a minute, dear, I must think . . ." Wind and rain swept across the window again, and the room grew still darker while he stood pondering. At last he said slowly: "After all, why add this man's death to the store of bitter memories we shall always have——"

"*Dick!*" It was a cry of agony, but he did not heed her.

"My lord, I have no desire to detain you. Go on your way, and escape if you can."

"But why, why——" She dropped the pistol and ran to her husband, and throwing her arms about him, burst into desperate tears. "I entreat you——"

"Rachel!" The word was a command, and she stood still, stifling the sob that rose in her throat. "Will you go out and see if the way is clear? We will wait here till you return."

Dumbly she picked up the fallen weapon

and replaced it in her pocket, then went to the door, with a strange expression on her face. Her husband waited until her footsteps had died away into the thunder of the storm, and then turned towards Jeffreys, who stood silently waiting.

"Will you be good-enough to show me where there is a chair?"

"I conclude you do not mean to tell her—that *I*—was the judge?"

"She shall never know," the blind man reassured him. "But, sir, I beg you to answer one question—it shall not hinder your escape, whatever your reply. It is this. Did you *know* that you were sending me to see my brother—gibbeted?"



"'Don't move again—I still have you covered!' The woman's voice came warningly, and Jeffreys stood still, biting his lip."

Jeffreys came diffidently to his side, and led him to his own vacated seat, then spoke with an effort.

"I must thank you——"

The other shook his head, and there was a pause. Jeffreys moved restlessly, paced across the room and back, and spoke hurriedly.

There was complete silence in the little room, for so long a time that it seemed as if it could never be broken again, although outside the tempest still raged on. The blind man was the first to move.

He sighed, then said quietly: "Well, my curiosity is satisfied now."

oo

Jeffreys spoke through stiff lips. "I am —sorry——"

The other raised his hand as his more sensitive ears caught the sound of a familiar step.

"Hush! She is coming back."

Rachel re-entered. She had wiped away all traces of her recent tears and spoke quite cheerfully, but breathlessly, almost as though she had been running.

"There is no one about, Dick, so his lordship may go as soon as he pleases."

Dick motioned to their erstwhile prisoner. "Then take your opportunity, sir. Do not linger—that may be fatal to you."

Jeffreys picked up his hat and cloak and went slowly towards the door. With his hand on the latch he paused and glanced back at the other two, but the words he would have uttered died in his throat as he met the woman's hostile gaze, and with bent head he stumbled out.

When he heard the door close her husband turned to her anxiously. "You do not blame me?" he asked, and she came and knelt by his side. "It was—not easy," he went on, and with one glance at his worn face she drew his head down on to her breast, while with her free hand she surreptitiously smoothed her wind-blown hair.

While they clung together her straining ears caught the sound of a sudden commotion outside, rising above the roar of the gale—shouts and cheers, mingled with curses and execrations. The door burst open and Mr. Porter rushed in.

"Here's news, ma'am! Bloody Jeffreys —the man himself——"

"Yes, what has happened?" she asked, yet as though she knew what the reply would be.

"Why, he's caught—here in my own house, the hound! Who sent word to the constables I don't know, but they soon recognised his devil's face—though he'd shaved off his eyebrows! They're taking him to the Grocers' Hall now in the Mayor's coach, if the mob doesn't tear him in pieces first!"

As he dashed away again the blind man, who had started to his feet, felt for Rachel's hand apologetically.

"Do you know, just for one moment I had a foolish misgiving—I feared you might have raised the alarm when I sent you out," he told her, and the exultation vanished from her face, to be replaced by an intense, watchful look which would have puzzled him could he have seen it.

She forced herself to speak calmly. "But you trusted me to do what you wanted, Dick?"

"My dear, of course I trusted you," he said emphatically, and with a quivering sigh she laid her burning lips on his white hair.

His wan face was radiant as he lifted it to hers.

"Rachel—I begin to believe in God again —there *is* such a thing as Justice, after all."

She started to laugh hysterically, but checked herself as they heard their host calling to them.

"Are you there, ma'am?" he cried. "You'd best be getting down to your ship. It'll be a rough crossing, but the tide's on the turn at last."

THE VAGABOND IN THE HEDGE.

WHAT of blackthorn, you who talk of posies,
Starry blackthorn gathered from the hedge,
You can keep your lilies and your roses
Where they mark the meadow and the sedge;
Blackthorn dark, a vagabond is he,
Thorny, sturdy, prickly too and free,
Growing through the sunshine and the show'r,
Till he breaks to unexpected flow'r.

Blackthorn wakes my sleeping heart to wonder,
Blackthorn gives my saddened heart a thrill
When his dark boughs break their way asunder,
And stars of hope their dusky branches fill;
Blackthorn, ah, a pedlar old is he,
Independent, sturdy too, and free,
Calls each Springtime at my cottage door
To sell me star-shine, burnished bright once more.

DOROTHY DICKINSON.

CANADA'S "VALLEY OF THE KINGS"



CHIEF WHITE WINGS.

The Red Man's Tribute to His Illustrious Dead

By
F. G. BAILEY
AND
B. A. CLARKE

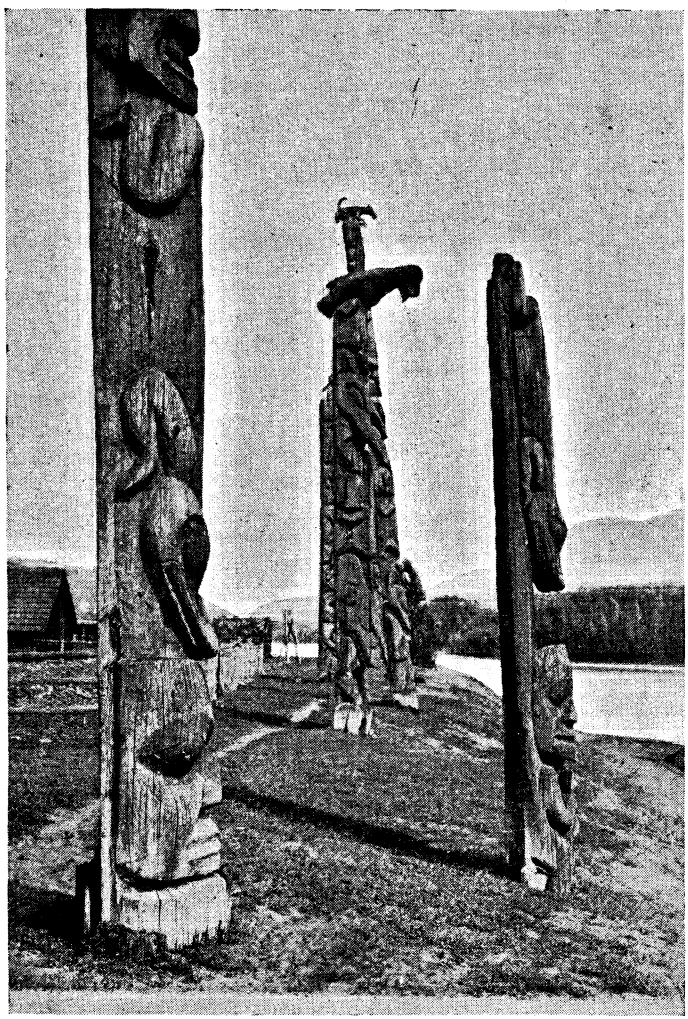
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CANADA, like Egypt, possesses a "Valley of the Kings." It is situated in Central British Columbia, along the Skeena River, which runs through the rugged fastnesses of the Coast Range westward to the sea and is, next to the Fraser, the largest Canadian river emptying into the Pacific. In this ancient valley lie the bones of many an Indian warrior and "wise man of the tribe," who was acquainted with the stillness of the western hills long before the coming of the "Palefaces." Egyptians honour their dead by erecting monuments of stone, with tombs sheltering the riches of the ages. The Indians of North America, however, honour their dead with lasting native cedar-wood by erecting columns grotesquely carved and painted to represent animals of the forest and fish of the sea. These Indian totem poles are found to-day only in the western parts of the North American Continent—in the coastal villages of Alaska and in the Skeena River Valley of British Columbia. The subjects are carved on native cedar-logs and fashioned with the superb skill of master craftsmen, and the poles that still remain are certainly a worthy monument to a race that is fast disappearing from the life of North America. Through the interest of the Canadian Government these totem poles are being preserved for future generations, and will remain the only tangible link between the civilisation of the white man and the culture of the redskin which it supplanted.

Before describing totem poles generally and explaining the folk-lore expressed by their carvings, let us glance at the local history that occasioned these particular poles of the Skeena River Valley.

About the time of the first arrival in the valley of paleface gold-miners a disastrous fire broke out in the village of Kitseucla, speedily enveloping its crude dwellings and

driving the distracted Indians and their families into the neighbouring woods. Helped by a fierce wind, the fire before long had laid the entire village in ashes. Even while it was raging, and, apparently, with no reasonable cause for suspicion, the Indians attributed the disaster to the newcomers. Above the roar of the flames could be heard the wailing of women, the howling of native dogs, and the muffled sound of the "tom-tom," which was a signal of revenge. The miners departed in haste, and eventually arrived at the then famous Omineca goldfields, where, amidst intense hardship and peril, fate smiled upon them, and they were rewarded. Unfortunately, however, news of their encampment soon reached the ears of the natives of Kitseucla, who, in resentment of the supposed arson, blocked the river to all new arrivals, as by a few logs and a few fallen trees it was easy to do. For a time it looked as if the fire that had such a disastrous effect on the native homes was destined to cause an outbreak even more destructive of revolt and massacre. However, helpers arrived in time to remedy matters peaceably, sailors from the coast, in a warship's boats, who, after clearing all obstructions up-river, satisfied the Indians of Kitseucla by assuring them of just reparation.



TOTEM POLES AT KITWANGA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, BEFORE RECONSTRUCTION.

This peaceful ending, fortunate in itself, was, however, the first step in a notable decline of a once famous race of North American Indians. From then onwards canoes passed freely up and down the Skeena River—white men came to trade and to search for gold in distant valleys. The process of civilised occupation had begun! Its completion, however, was arrested by another racial misunderstanding.

In the year 1888 an outbreak of measles occurred in the neighbourhood of Kitwanga. The disease spread rapidly, and a sickness never experienced before proved fatal to many. Had the white man brought it, or was its presence due to some evil spell woven by the medicine-man known as "Nitoo"? To settle the question, the solution of which had become more imperative owing to the death of a baby, "Nitoo" was slain. An old-time deadly feud began now in earnest. Suspicion for the murder fell on one "Kitwancool Jim," a native who was friendly to the traders, and his flight to a hiding-place in the woods certainly seemed confirmation of his guilt. In spite of "Nitoo's" death,

the sickness still raged, which satisfied many of the terrified Indians that, after all, the root of the evil was the presence of the distrusted white man. Sixteen years afterwards the trouble began anew. This time four or five special constables were sent with instructions to arrest "Kitwancool Jim" on the capital charge. Soon in possession of information of his whereabouts, they went where he might be expected to pass and waited, fully armed, concealed among forest trees bordering the old trade route from the Naas. On moccasined feet, traversing the ground noiselessly with his peculiar and fast native lope, their man came into view with a swiftness that was startling to the watchers, who, nevertheless, sharply called on him to surrender. He heard them and stopped; and, for a moment, whilst the wind stirred the leaves and branches and whispered of sweet liberty and life, no one moved. But this space of time was enough for him to decide they had come to kill him, and he turned to flee. Impulsively, and from a mistaken sense of duty, one of the constables opened fire, and so checked the course of the unfortunate "Kitwancool Jim," laying his lifeless body across the trail. The noise of the shot re-echoed through the woods, frightening the birds and setting them to flight. The results of this hasty and unfortunate shot were momentous. It started the tom-toms again. As a mark of respect to their various chiefs, who took part in these risings, and to commemorate the dead, the Indians of different tribes erected the grotesquely carved poles we find in the Skeena River district, and a considerable number elsewhere.

When first discovered, because of their elaborate carvings of birds and animals, these poles were considered idols, instead of what they really are—monuments erected to the illustrious dead—wooden tombstones of once famous North American Indians, and totem poles because they convey, not the heroes' names, but their respective totems. Why an Indian wanted totems, what they signified, and how he could have so many, cannot be understood without a glance at the subject of totemism generally.

Totemism, which, among primitive peoples, has been found in all quarters of the globe, has two aspects—religious and social. Its religious side is the belief that each of the clans into which a tribe is divided has a natural affinity with some species of animal or bird, creating an obligation of mutual helpfulness, the animal's contribution being often the sending of helpful dreams. But it is always sympathetic and willing to help. The man reciprocates by not killing the animal, by showing it respect, and by enforcing respect from others. An Indian coming upon anyone abusing his totem



AFTER RECONSTRUCTION.

animal covers his face in embarrassment, afterwards exacting a reparation from the offender. How he effects this, scholars have not told us. The clan traces its remote ancestry to the species represented by its totem, and the clansmen believe, as their funeral ceremonies testify, that death will



HEAD OF FIGURE ON TOTEM POLE.

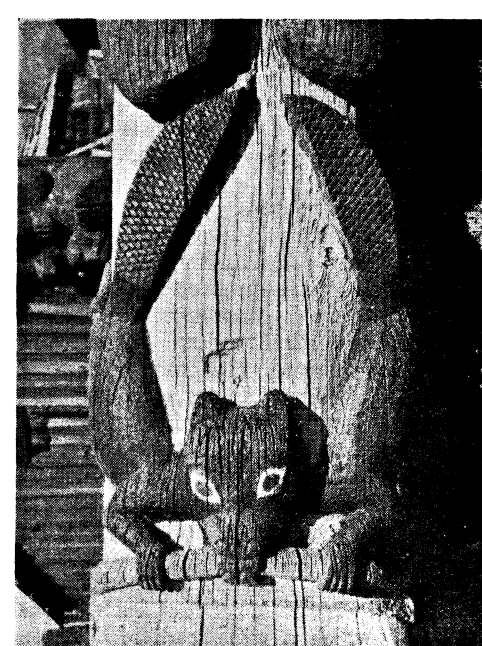
bring them into closer companionship with these friendly creatures. So much concerning the religious aspect of totemism.

More important are its social implications. To begin with, it is a great freemasonry. A clan is a brotherhood, every member of which must help a fellow-member to the utmost of his power. Closer even than the bond of marriage is that of clan. Man and wife being of different clans, if these should fall out, the wedded pair become enemies, one of them suffering in addition the active hostility of all the children. Generally poor daddy is the victim—children mostly adopting the totem of their mother. All this, you think, might be avoided if the parents had the same totem. But that would contravene the whole system. Marriage inside the tribe but outside the clan lies at the root of totemism, which many scholars trace to the horror of incest and in-breeding. The taboo often extends to a group of clans constituting, perhaps, half the tribe. This group, or phratry, has a totem animal which is adopted by every member of the clans it includes.

Having explained an Indian's clan and phratry symbols, there remain only his personal totems. These he acquires in the dreams that accompany the long enforced fasts of his adolescence. Personal totems lack the sanctity of clan totems, and their permanence. Like the candidate's convictions, they can be changed. The friendship of a personal totem animal not bringing discernible good luck, a man may "sack" it and engage another.

We are now prepared intelligently to watch a totem pole in the making. The hero is dead and his obsequies have been celebrated with noisy grief and some quiet relish of ritual and catering. Every mark of respect has been paid except the erection of a worthy memorial pole, and for this the successor to the hero's name and title, his sister's son, has called in the tribal Master Carver, an artist in every sense of the word, but expensive. His services are not for everyone. The short and simple annals of the poor will not be recorded by *his* chisel. Beginners and bunglers are entrusted with *them*, which is why we find to-day, alongside of totem poles that are truly works of art, others that are quite the reverse, as our pictures show.

Our mourners having commissioned one who understands his job from A to Z, let us see how he sets about his task. First of all he selects what he considers a suitable tree, a cedar because of the readiness with which it can be carved, and an extra good one at that. Not half enough care, he thinks, is taken nowadays about this. Look at the famous old totem poles. Find,



A SPLIT BEAVER.

if you can, a piece of inferior cedar among *them.*

Soon he has his log trimmed of its branches and with its surface smoothed, and ready to be carved. Now begins the only part of his task quite worthy of his genius—that of producing a monument arresting and startling. Some wonderful poles lately had come from the ultra-modernists, whose pole-tops were really terrific, with snarling, rampant, or overhanging beasts of prey. He can do as arresting work, granted a suitable subject. Unfortunately he has no choice here—nor has anyone. The top animal *must* be the wife's symbol, which in this instance is—— Where is that list the family drew up? He finds it, reads and dashes it to the ground. A salmon! His rivals have all the luck. How can he, or anyone, make a salmon startling? Who wants a salmon carved anywhere, except on a dish? The departed might have helped by choosing a squaw from more imaginative stock, like that across the river. Because their remote ancestor had killed, or *said* he had killed, a monstrous mountain lion



A STATUESQUE FIGURE.



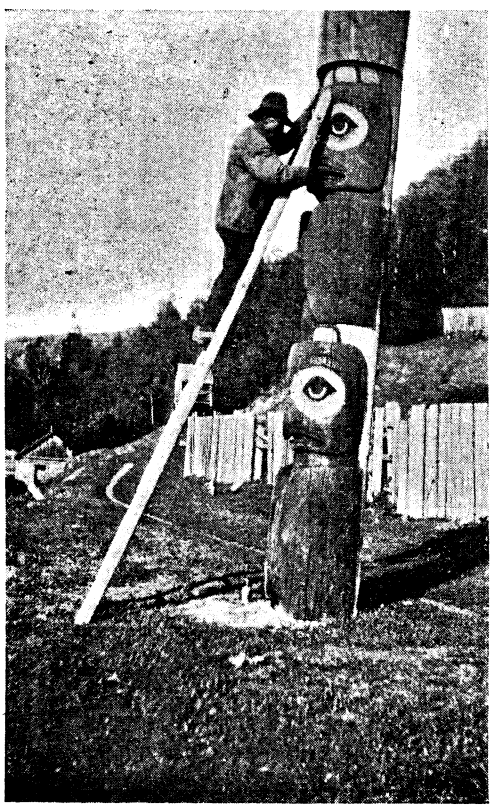
IMPRESSIVE BUT NOT BEAUTIFUL.

that threatened his whole tribe with extinction, they had taken a cougar for their totem. What a pole-top one would make, coming out nearly at right angles as if in the very act of dropping, as the manner of the brute is, upon passers below. (The Master Carver doesn't need telling that he mustn't include an irrelevant cougar any more than our College of Heralds needs to be warned against enriching one English gentleman's coat-of-arms with the crest of his neighbour.)

Away in the village of Kitwanga is an even more inspiring totem, also the outcome of a legend, that of a grizzly-bear that defended one of the women of the tribe against the attacks of others. This particular bear took the woman up the mountain to his den, where he was supposed to have changed into a man and married her. The brother of the woman searched for her for many months. One day he chanced to notice a snowball which his sister had made and thrown down the mountain trail. This clue helped him to find the bear's den, where he engaged the bear and eventually killed it. He then carried his sister and her children back to camp. As they grew older they were found to be possessed of a supernatural sense which helped them to understand bears. In consequence, the family became wealthy through the sale of bear-skins secured by many a successful hunt.

This legend is represented on all the totem poles of this Indian family—sometimes by little bears—sometimes by human forms, and on some poles the woman is shown holding the little bear cubs. The bear's den is shown as a large circular opening in the chest of the human figure that represents one of the bear's children.

Grumbling as he works at his narrow opportunities compared with those enjoyed by his Kitwanga rivals, and working while he grumbles, the Master Carver achieves a

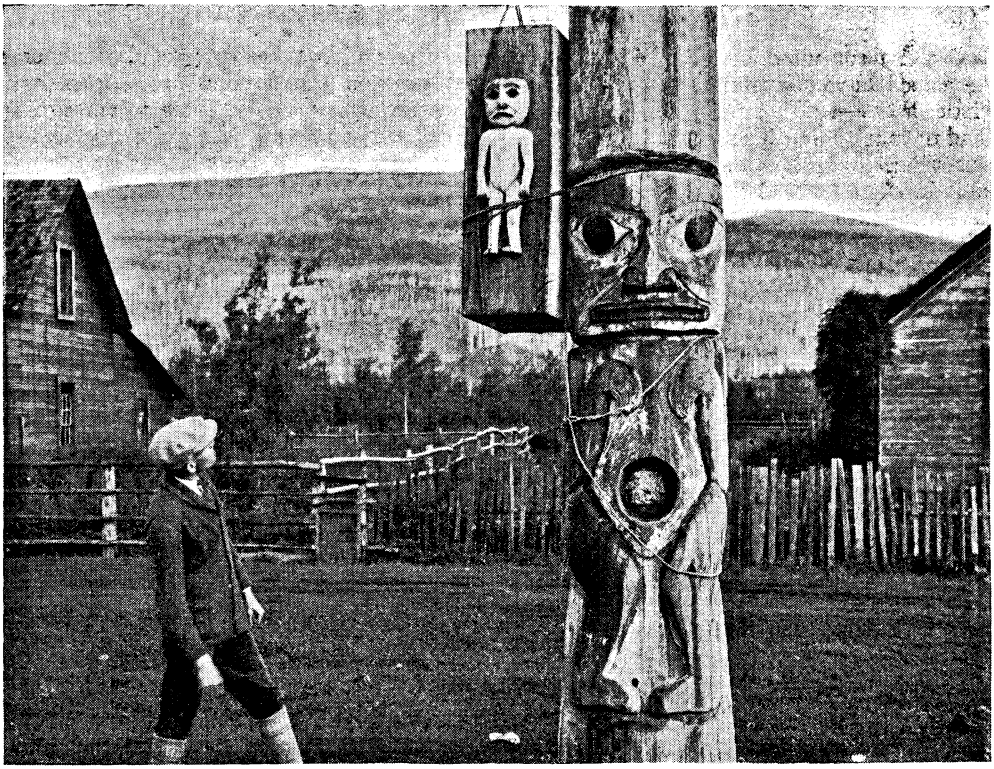


A TOTEM POLE AT KITWANGA.

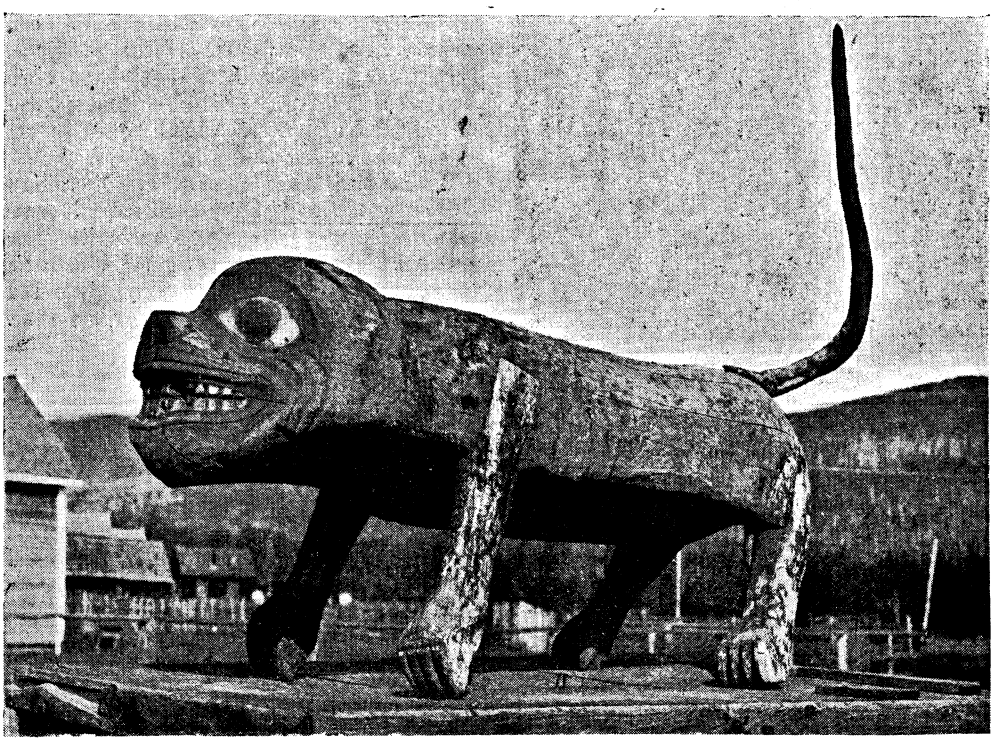
mildly satisfactory salmon and then turns his attention to what must come immediately below it—the hero's clan totem. This might easily have been worse. The totem is a raven, as of course he has always known, but the Raven clan may also be represented by a frog. (Such duplication, although uncommon, was not unique.) Fortunately, thinks the carver, the family hasn't ordered the understudy. He can make something of the raven, for since the days of his apprenticeship he has been carving this symbol frequently. No one else can produce ravens like his—not even Nature. At this familiar task he is soon working almost subconsciously, and with growing complacency. The bird is coming out very well. After all, subject isn't everything. A raven from the chisel of a master can have more value than another's life-sized human figure with circular chestcut representing a bear's den. This promises to be the best totem pole he has ever carved. He slaps his thigh. An inspiration has come to him. The hero's rather footling and too numerous personal totems can be used, cut quite tiny and in low relief, as an enrichment of the spaces between the essential symbols—those of clan and phratry. This is going to be the best pole *anyone* has ever carved. He is quite impatient now to see it completed and set up. In this spirit our super-memorial pole, like other works of art, was fashioned. That Indian carvers *have* excelled, a study of our illustrations proves, and these, it must be remembered, are only a small selection.

There are more than 100 of these totem poles in the valley of the Skeena River, within fifteen miles of the northern line of the Canadian National Railways. Upwards of forty of them can be seen from the observation coaches of the train. The Canadian Government, realising their value from an archæological point of view, has taken steps to preserve them for future generations. It sent an archæologist from the National Museum of Canada into the valley of the Skeena. The officer worked for two seasons at Kitwanga, which is a small "tank village"—a stopping-place for the Transcontinental express. Two years later the Government party concerned carried out similar work at a place known as Kitselas, on the opposite side of the river and farther down, where many more poles are still in existence.

Although the Government were anxious to begin their work of preservation as soon as possible, it was first of all necessary to gain permission from the Indians. Naturally, at first, the Indians resented any proposal of the white man to interfere with the noble monuments to their dead, but after a time, under persuasion, they began to appreciate what the Government agents were wanting to do for them. Ultimately they allowed the work to be carried out and gave all the assistance they could. At times this was very valuable. Often it was necessary to depend on their memory of what had been, and occasionally the patriarch



A DRUM TOTEM POLE.



DOG TOTEM.

had to be consulted before any idea could be gained as to the original colours. When these had been definitely established the actual work of restoring the poles was entrusted to Indians of the village, whose zeal in some cases defeated the object the Government agents had in mind; for they restored, to the best of their ability, the colours as they had appeared on the totem when lt was first erected, whereas the white men desired a more subdued colouring, if possibie a faded colour, that would give the impression of age.



OUTSTRETCHED WINGS.

Many of the poles in this village of Kitwanga had actually rotted below the ground and toppled over, and subsequently been left lying flat on the ground for many years. It therefore became necessary for the restorers, before doing anything else, to preserve what was left of the wood. A new pole was first of all inlaid in the back of the old one and both were thoroughly saturated with creosote to prevent further decay from weather and insects. The exposed parts of the old totem were then coated with as much oil as they would absorb, and it was finally erected once more, but now on a concealed base of cement. Thus sixteen poles and three totem figures have been restored by the white man in the little village of Kitwanga. In addition, twelve poles have been restored at the Kitselas village during the past three seasons.

Many hundreds of tourists stop at Kitwanga to view what remains of this lost Indian art and to marvel at the culture of a vanishing race. These totem poles still stand amongst the descendants of the people who erected them, in view of the distant hills and in sound of the tumbling waters of the river.

Many other totem poles have been removed from their original locations and deposited in museums in various parts of Canada. For instance, fine specimens are exhibited in the provincial museum of Victoria, British Columbia, and others in the National Museum of the Canadian Government at Ottawa. Some magnificent specimens of this ancient Indian craftsmanship may be seen in Stanley Park, Vancouver, facing the waters of the Narrows through which passes all the ocean-going shipping entering and leaving the harbour. The Parks Board of the city has already begun the creation of a model Indian village, and has set up several fine totem poles which have been secured in various parts of the province. These, like those at Kitwanga, have been preserved against the weather and placed on cement bases, to remain there for future generations to see and admire.

Totem sculpture is a record of Indian history, genealogy, legend, memorial commemoration and art. The genealogical pole is usually erected in front of its owner's house, and, as its name implies, gives the genealogy of the family living on the spot. The wife's totem crowns the top, the husband's totem comes next, and so on down the pole. Any native passing can tell at a glance to what family the natives belong and can form a pretty accurate idea as to the welcome awaiting him.

In South-Eastern Alaska, where a number of poles exist, the native population is divided into two great parts, known as the eagle, or man's totem, and the crow, or woman's totem. The sub-totems of the eagle are the bear, wolf, whale and shark, and those of the crow are the beaver, frog, salmon and seal. Every family must be both eagle and crow fraternity. The true totem pole stood directly in front of a house or else formed its doorway.

Celebrities in Plaster

By

François Cogné

THE FAMOUS FRENCH SCULPTOR



SIGNOR MUSSOLINI.

IN the course of my career I have made many statues but only about fifty busts. My sitters have included crowned heads, leading statesmen, dignitaries of the Church, great soldiers, aristocrats, artists of world-wide celebrity, and many financial magnates. The original statues are to be found in various parts of the world, leaving me nothing but my models and sketches and my recollections as souvenirs of the many distinguished people who have honoured me with their confidence and with whom I have been privileged to converse during the sittings. To most of my sitters I am bound not only by the creative tie but by real friendship. It is a pleasure to think of them all, without exception. I have learnt to know them as they are known by few of their contemporaries, that is to say, as plain human beings without any "attitudes." During their sittings in my studio they were able to forget their social positions and to drop the masks they are compelled by public life to wear, so that they showed their real visage to the sculptor who was endeavouring to record their features for posterity. I pay no attention, when modelling, to costumes or decorations or attitudes, and I do not endeavour to obtain photographic exactitude but rather to look behind the eyes, to penetrate below the lines of the face and to find the real, hidden man or woman in the model before me.

I make many sketches of each sitter before I begin modelling, not merely because this is necessary but because I love drawing. I sketch the head from different angles to ascertain its shape, I take careful measurements, and follow the same system whether my model is a humble individual or some distinguished personage.

In my villa at Antibes I have a museum containing the plaster models of all my statues. It is a portrait gallery of celebrities. Here the visitor will find a bust of

Pope Pius XI with a divine, soulful expression such as I have found on no other face. Not far away is a plain head with eyes which might readily be taken for those of a poet: M. Painlevé, the accomplished mathematician, formerly Prime Minister of France. A little further on, depicted in sporting clothes and a soft collar, is the King of Spain, Alfonso XIII, who, though descended from a line of monarchs supposed to have been great sticklers for etiquette, is anything but fond of pomps and ceremonies. He wanted to have his bust reduced to its simplest expression—so much so that I was obliged to break the straight lines by throwing some drapery over the shoulder. The Marshals of France are in my collection—Foch and Joffre and Lyautey, to whom Pétain will soon be added; and politicians—M. Briand, whose face is full of wit and humour, and M. Barthou, the Minister of Justice, whose eyes have a quaint expression behind his pince-nez, and M. Clemenceau, whom I have modelled in a great variety of attitudes. The statue that reminds one of a Roman leader is Mussolini. The refined face, with sad, dreamy eyes, is the late Robert de Flers, the French dramatist. The young man with long hair and the profile of a tragedian is Maurice Rostand, the poet and dramatist, son of Edmund Rostand the author of "L'Aiglon" and "Cyrano de Bergerac." The bald-headed man with the strong face is Joseph Caillaux, the French statesman and financial expert, whose political career has aroused so much bitterness and of whom so many hard things have been said, but for whom I entertain strong feelings of friendship as a man without fear or reproach. The man with his mouth slightly open and a remarkable expression in his right eye is M. Coty, the Frenchman who made a fortune in perfumery and is now a great newspaper proprietor.

I have had many stage celebrities as sitters—MM. Mounet-Sully, Gemier and Antoine, to mention only a few. I have modelled M. Dreyfus, the head of the largest milling trust in Europe, and Mr. Jay Gould, the American millionaire and philanthropist. A lovely face—that of the child of the late Pierre Loti. Children, by the by, are the easiest models for the sculptor, as the shapes of the head and the expressions of the eyes and mouth are very similar.

The most difficult models, I need hardly say, are women, not only because they cannot keep quiet during the sittings, but because artists can never make them look sufficiently young and beautiful. They do not consider whether a statue is a work of art, nor is resemblance to the original of great importance in their eyes; they want the artist to make them look beautiful and still more beautiful. Of course, there are exceptions, and I have been fortunate to include some great and charming ladies among my sitters—the Queen of Spain, some Italian princesses, Mme. Caillaux, Mrs. Jay Gould, and the late Sarah Bernhardt, a personage who had some claim to notice.

I was twenty-five years of age when I obtained my first commission. My sitter was General Michel, and now, as it happens, I am working on another great soldier, Marshal Pétain.

When I have some celebrated personage as sitter, a fever of inspiration comes over me and remains until I have "conquered" my model. I work quickly; three sittings, of half an hour or an hour each, are generally sufficient, and when I have finished my model I feel as if the creative force within me had burned itself out. The statue or bust has ceased to be a problem for me; it has become an item, a document to be filed away among the others. The model goes into my museum, and I proceed to look for a new problem.

When I am at work I sometimes forget to be polite to my sitter, however highly placed or celebrated he or she may be, and I even neglect the usual formalities of social intercourse to an extent which might be considered rude; but here the superiority of really great minds shows itself. They do not consider it an insult if the artist, absorbed in his work, omits to answer them, or lights a cigarette without asking permission. As an instance I may quote what was said to me by M. Clemenceau when I told him after the last sitting that my work was finished.

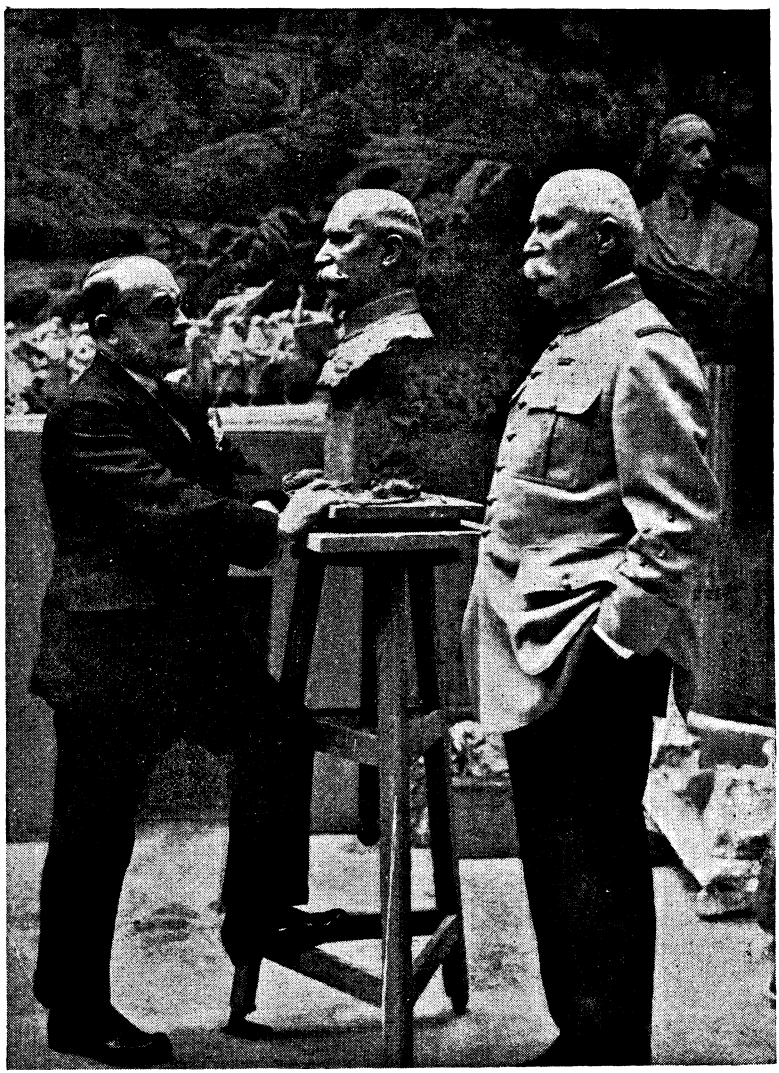
"What do you mean?" he demanded. "This isn't my last visit here. I shall come and see you often."

The idea of forming what I may call my Pantheon of modern celebrities was given me by Arsène Alexandre, the well-known art critic of the *Figaro*, in the following paragraph:

"When, in some future age, historians proceed to deal with the great war and the records of our own time, one of their duties will be to examine François Cogné's statues. They will then be able to form an idea not only of the outward form of those who

played important parts in this period, but of the inward personality and the mind that worked behind the screen formed by the eyes."

I love all my models. Every one of them brings to my mind some pleasant souvenir, every facility to get the atmosphere of the palace in which the Holy Father lives his earthly life. In this way I was able to attune my mind to the Pope's wonderfully ideal and spiritual expression which I have endeavoured to put into my bust of him.

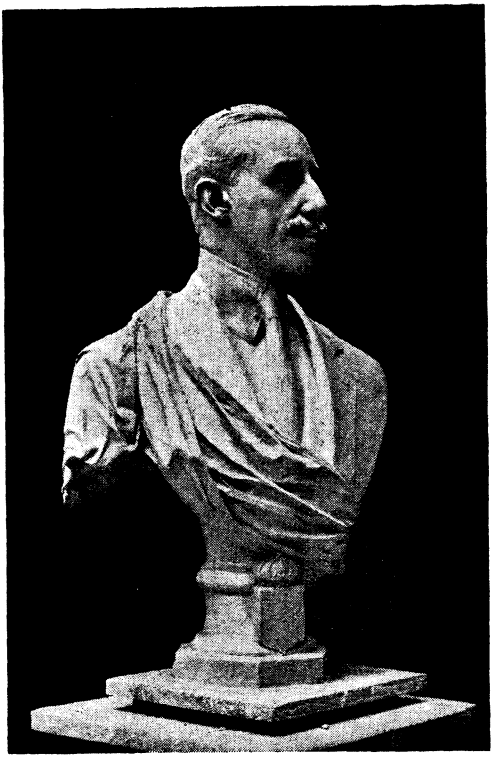


THE ARTIST AT WORK WITH MARSHAL PÉTAIN.

which is as fresh as if it belonged to something that happened only yesterday.

Pope Pius XI paid me the great honour of selecting me out of over 300 sculptors, gathered in Rome from all parts of the world, to make the official bust of the living head of the Roman Catholic Church. As soon as this was decided, all doors in the Vatican were open to me, and I was given It was my privilege to see all the art treasures of the Vatican. I was allowed to touch the incomparable masterpieces of Michael Angelo, examine his frescoes closely and even see his models and sketches, which are not shown to the public. I was permitted to attend service in the Sistine Chapel, where the Pope says mass in solitude every morning.

On a hot day in July, 1922, I presented



KING ALFONSO.

myself, at 4 p.m., at the bronze door of the Vatican to begin work on the bust of His Holiness. The gigantic Swiss guards, who had often seen me before at the Vatican and knew me as an habitué, let me in without question, but as soon as I entered the courtyard the Papal gendarmes asked for my permit. My explanation as to the object of my presence did not satisfy them and they took me to the commandant, who, having already received his instructions, ordered his men to show me in, and I was conducted to an immense hall where the audiences are usually given. Here a priest asked for my credentials, and, a few minutes later, a Vatican official in a pink surplice made his appearance and signalled to me to follow him. I did so, on tiptoe, and was conducted through a small chapel, generally used for the Pontiff's private devotions, and up a corkscrew staircase, used as a rule by the Holy Father only, and was handed over to another clerical official, also in a pink surplice but having purple embroideries. My new guide mentioned in conversation that the room in which we stood was the one in which Pope Leo XIII died. A door opened noiselessly, and another official, in black with a white chain round his neck, made his appearance and motioned to me to bring my implements into the next room—a marvellously beautiful place with a throne, over which was a richly ornamented baldacchino, or canopy. A marble statue of Saint Cecilia stood on a pedestal, and on the wall was a portrait of the Pope. My guide pulled a window-curtain aside, and I realised that this was the studio in which I was to work. Next came an official of still higher rank ("How many more?" I asked myself) and inquired if I was ready to begin, at the same time intimating that the sitting was not expected to last more than ten minutes. I asked him about the etiquette to be observed with the Holy Father—what I should say, and whether I was expected to go on my knees. The chamberlain explained the very simple observances required, and I waited. The minutes passed, and the effect, combined with all the ceremonial I had gone through before reaching the inner sanctum, was to make me very nervous. At last a door on the left opened, and, coming in from a hall of immense length, which I believe was a library, I saw the Holy Father. He was dressed entirely in white, with small white buttons, his eyes half closed behind thick glasses. I promptly forgot all my instructions and fell on my knees, my sight failing me for the moment and my heart beating very fast. As if in a dream, I heard the Pope give me his blessing in a few Latin words. I got up to begin my work, but my hands were trembling so much that I put everything upside down. His Holiness looked on at my clumsy operations in patience for a while and then said with good-natured severity:

"I think you had better try to calm yourself, as we shall lose time if you are nervous."

This encouraged me, and I ventured to ask His Holiness if he would repeat the gesture he made when giving me his benediction, as I would like to record the attitude in marble for posterity, but the Holy Father declined to pose in this attitude.

"All I can do," he said, "is to give you my benediction again, so that you can observe my actions."

Then the Pope gave me his benediction twice, and I was allowed to take a photograph of him.

He then asked me if I was ready to begin, and I replied that I must first take some measurements which were indispensable for accuracy.

His Holiness sat down, I made some hurried sketches of him, and then proceeded to measure his head with an instrument. In the course of this operation I several times touched the Pope's head not only with the points of the instrument but with my fingers—a circumstance which seemed to horrify the chamberlain in attendance, but His Holiness merely watched my proceedings attentively and remarked:

"If you want to know what sized hat I take, I can tell you. It is 66 centimetres."

In the meantime the chamberlain was looking through the book of sketches and photographs I had brought with me. Seeing some photographs of my statue of Marshal Lyautey, he handed them to the Pope.

"L'homme du Marco!" (the man of Morocco) His Holiness exclaimed. "It is a good likeness, and you were quite right not to omit that small detail which belongs to the personality of this great soldier—the cigarette between his fingers."

Speaking to his chamberlain, the Pope added:

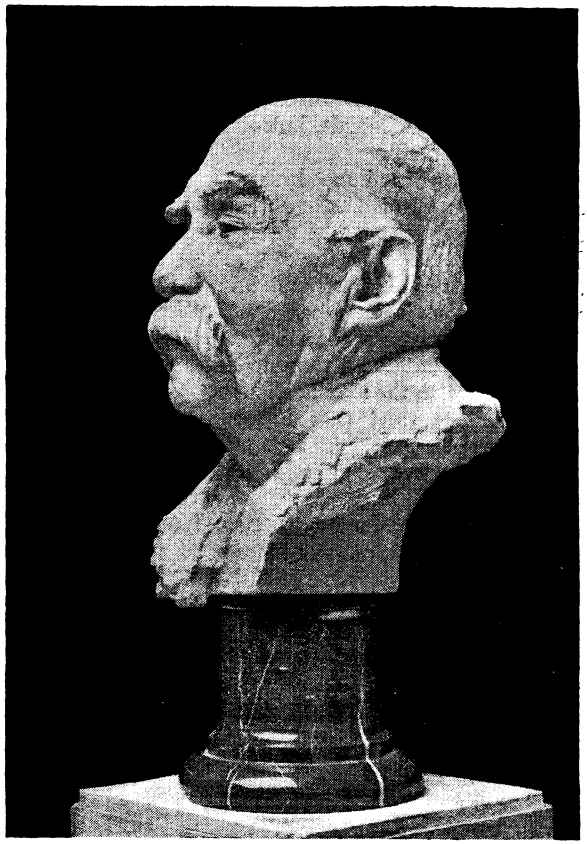
"What a strange thing! Lyautey smokes cigarettes day and night, and yet his brain remains perfectly clear and he does excellent work."

When the chamberlain showed the Pope some photographs of the bust of Mgr. Ceretti, Papel Nuncio to France, His Holiness remarked:

"This is Ceretti to the life, although I think that in reality he is even more serene and smiling."

In the meantime I had finished my sketching. The Pope looked at the drawings and dismissed me with his benediction, reminding me that I was to come again next day. Thus ended the first sitting.

Next day the Pope was again wearing his long white flannel robe, with a wide collar completely covering his broad shoulders. He also wore a heavy gold necklace, to which was attached a cross studded with amethysts and brilliants. His smooth cheeks, high forehead and smiling lips radiated goodness and benevolence. He carries his head slightly to the right. While I was modelling him, I thought of what was said about him by Mgr. Ceretti when the latter was in my studio:



THE LATE M. CLEMENCEAU.

"Pius XI," he said, "is goodness itself. He knows nearly every living language. He spent forty years in the Vatican Library, studying manuscripts day and night. He has acquired a mass of knowledge such as very few men possess."

At the close of the third sitting, His Holiness thanked me for my efforts and dismissed me, and once more I went through the series of great and splendid halls that form the residence of the high-minded and simple-living head of the Church. Everything about his surroundings is gigantic. The guards are all very tall men of about 6 ft. 6 in., and everything else is on the same scale. No ordinary man can help feeling small in such a place, and this sensation is intensified when you sit on one of the tall chairs and find you cannot touch the floor with your feet. All very well for a gigantic Swiss guardsman, but it reminded me of the day when, as a little child, I was allowed to sit at the family table for the first time. The

feeling of smallness in the presence of vastness is intensified when you come into the presence of the Pope, not on account of his physical proportions, as he is rather below the middle height, but of his mental calibre.

In addition to Pope Pius XI, I have executed busts of Cardinal Gasparri and other high dignitaries of the Church, and I have done the same for the greatest man in modern Italy, Benito Mussolini. I happened to be in Rome when another French sculptor was given a commission for a bust of the Duce, but the latter did not seem to be satisfied with the result. The newspapers stated at the time that he sent for me. This was not a fact, but he appeared to be pleased when I was introduced to him by the French Ambassador, who showed him my drawings and suggested that I should undertake his bust. Mussolini agreed and I began work without delay. When, at the first sitting, I studied the lines of the head and face of the Dictator, who stood before me in a simple and natural attitude, I was more and more impressed by his likeness to the type of the old Roman military leader, and I did my best to reproduce this impression in the bust. We talked while I worked, and the Duce seemed curious to hear about my travels and what I thought of the great men I had encountered in the course of my professional career. His own principal subject of conversation was an artistic renaissance which he predicted would take place in the European countries wherein revolutionary changes have followed the war. When the sittings were finished Mussolini was enthusiastic and went so far as to call me the greatest sculptor in Europe.

I was naturally much pleased by this praise, for I must admit that not all my models are so generous in their bestowal of praise and encouragement—M. Clemenceau, for instance, who is very chary of praise. "It is good," he says, and that is all, but those who know him understand what this one word means, coming from him. He is a taciturn and solitary man, much given to introspection. During our three sittings he hardly spoke three words. I made several busts of him, some with his skull-cap and some without, and I came to the conclusion that the characteristic and remarkable shape of his head stands out more prominently without the cap. It seemed to round off the edges of his forceful personality. A bust of him with his cap would not help people to believe that he used to be called "The Tiger."

After a sitting I took M. Clemenceau round my studio and showed him the busts of many of his great contemporaries. He looked at them with cold indifference, and I asked him if he did not recognise them. He replied:

"I used to know them all, but not now. Those days are over. No, I don't want to know them."

I could tell a great many stories as to what my illustrious models said about one another while they were sitting to me, but remarks of this kind in the artist's sanctum are not intended for publication and must remain secret.

A sitter who presents a strong contrast to Clemenceau is M. Joseph Caillaux, whom I count as one of my best friends. Whatever people may say about him, I think he is a very remarkable man, with a high intelligence amounting to genius. He is one of the most highly-educated and most reliable men I ever met, and one of the wittiest. He is well informed on a great variety of questions. He can discuss any conceivable topic, which may be social, artistic, political, anything you like except finance. Mme. Caillaux, whose bust I have also had the honour of making, is an art expert. She has given courses of lectures at the Louvre on the history of art. She is extremely well informed and can discuss any question in art or literature or politics. Like her husband, she is interested in every department of modern life, but she never mentions the great tragedy in her career.

Marshal Lyautey was one of the most difficult models I have ever had. He cannot keep still for a single minute. During all the sittings he gave me he was dictating letters, giving orders, receiving reports, asking questions of myself and others and answering queries on various points put before him, and all the time smoking cigarettes, lighting each one with the stump of its predecessor, as if he were afraid that the eternal fire might be in danger of dying out. Nothing escapes his eye, and I have rarely met anyone with such good judgment in matters of art. He is not only very fond of art, but—what is very rare in a soldier—he is himself an artist.

Marshal Joffre, on the other hand, is an ideal sitter. He is quiet and patient and scarcely makes a movement while the sculptor is at work. I was making a bust

of him while the war was still going on and while he was leading a hermit-like existence on a boat. While I was sketching him, I asked why he did not prefer a more cheerful kind of residence.

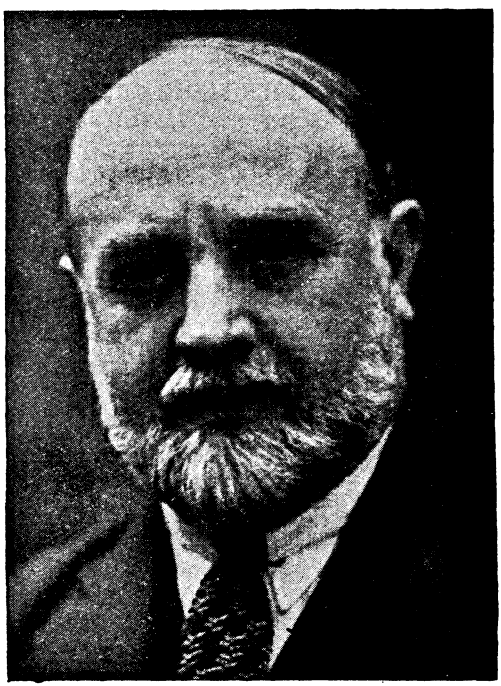
He waved his hand resignedly and replied:

"Because I feel sheltered from the world and all the objectionable things it contains."

Marshal Foch was another good sitter. He kept quiet, but his attention was never at fault, and he followed every detail of the making of the bust. Of Marshal Pétain, another distinguished military sitter, I have the pleasantest recollections. He seems to know everybody who is anybody. He is a real man of the world, with definite opinions of his own on all sorts of questions—politics, literature, art and sport.

All my military sitters were alike in one respect. They never discussed military subjects or said a word about their own achievements or experiences in war.

As a sitter, M. Briand is very much as he is in the Chamber of Deputies or at the sessions of the League of Nations: full of wit and *savoir-vivre*, a good-humoured optimist and philosopher. And, also, he is constantly smoking cigarettes.



M. FRANÇOIS COGNÉ.

As a "model" couple in every sense of the word I must mention Mr. and Mrs. Jay Gould. They spend millions every year in philanthropic work. Mrs. Gould is one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. Mr. Gould is a great business man and financier. During our sittings he often talked about financial manipulations and financial politics, no doubt condoning my complete ignorance of these matters.

The liveliest and most unceremonious of all my distinguished sitters is King Alfonso XIII of Spain.

When I went to the royal palace in Madrid to make the King's bust, his private secretary, Marquis Terres, showed me into the hall generally used for receptions of ambassadors, and left me. I naturally expected, knowing the historical reputation of the Spanish Court, that I should be required to observe strict etiquette. Nothing of the kind. After I had been waiting a few minutes, the King came into the room alone, without the slightest formality, walked briskly towards me, shook hands and said:

"Good morning, M. Cogné, how are you?" and then, without even leaving me time to make a bow, he asked me whether the light was good enough in the room where we were, or if I would prefer some other room in the palace. When I assured him that the light was quite good, he said:

"Come along and I will show you over the palace, and then you will be able to choose."

He began, however, by sitting in a purple arm-chair in front of a huge Gobelins tapestry while I made some preliminary sketches of his head. He talked freely about his experiences in France and his shooting expeditions, and when I had finished he took me by the arm and showed me through the whole palace. I have never had such a distinguished and well-informed guide. Every corner in the place seemed to remind him of some story. In the throne-room, the ceiling of which is adorned by a masterpiece by Tiepolo, he said:

"You see those two arm-chairs on the dais? The one on the left I found in the cellars one day when I was on a voyage of

discovery in that part of the palace. I had it cleaned and covered with red stuff to match the walls. Later on, the Queen used it for ceremonies in the throne room, and I liked it so much that I had a similar chair made for myself, with the Queen's head and mine carved on the woodwork of each chair."

"The four lions round the throne," the King continued, "always remind me of an amusing event of my childhood, which makes me smile whenever I think of it. I was about five years old at the time, and one day I was brought into the throne room to attend a formal reception for the first time. The ambassadors of all the great Powers, grandees of Spain, dignitaries of the Church and high officials were there, and, of course, all the members of the royal family. I was bored to death, and, after I had yawned several times, my eye caught one of the lions. I quietly slipped off my chair and jumped on to the lion's back. A royal decree was being read out at the time by some high personage, who of course stopped short when he saw what I was doing. The Master of the Ceremonies urged me in a low voice to return to my chair, but in vain. Then he tried to lift me off my perch, but the only result was to make me put my arms round the lion's neck and hang on with all my might. This was too much for the gravity of the ambassadors and notabilities around me, and they found it impossible to conceal their smiles. Only the members of the royal family succeeded in keeping straight faces. You can imagine what I got in the evening as a reward," the King added, with a heartv laugh.

In another room he said:

"You see those porcelain fruits in the decoration of the ceiling? One of them dropped while a reception was going on, and was smashed to pieces on the floor. It was very lucky that no one was hurt, but whenever I come through this room with people I wonder if the same thing will happen again, and it makes me anxious for them. Let's hurry up!"

After the great reception-rooms, the King showed me his own study, the walls of which were covered with hunting trophies—records of his prowess as a sportsman. I also saw numerous English racing prints and some fine antlers. On the desk were some bronze figures of soldiers, a bust of Napoleon, and a large and beautifully carved cigar-box. The bedroom has red silk carpets, a large brass bedstead and wardrobes with mirror doors. Three pictures by the French artist Detaille hang near the bed.

"What is your programme for to-day?" the King asked, after showing me over the palace. "If you are free, you may as well come with me this afternoon, and you can look around while I am playing polo."

I was glad to accept this invitation, as it would give me an opportunity of making inconspicuous observations of my sitter.

The polo ground is not far from Madrid. As soon as we got out of the car, the King presented me to the Queen and hurried off to get ready for his polo, which he seemed to enjoy immensely. At tea-time I accompanied the Queen and her suite to an English tea-house on the polo ground. Her Majesty honoured me by asking me to sit next to her, and the conversation ranged from exhibitions to bull-fights and motion pictures.

"Have you seen Raquel Meller in 'Imperial Violets'?" the Queen asked. "It is a good film, but the scenario is not quite correct in some details. A Queen is not allowed to go about without at least one lady-in-waiting close to her. It is one of the drawbacks of the *métier*."

Next day, while King Alfonso was sitting to me, I studied his face closely and observed lines exactly like those in the portrait of Philip IV, painted with masterly skill by Velasquez; the same pronounced under-lip, the same neck and the same eyelids. As if he guessed my thoughts, the King smiled and remarked:

"I know people think me ugly, but what can they expect with my pedigree?" and he laughed cheerfully.

Having finished my work at the third sitting, I made my arrangements for returning home. Hearing this, the King, who was also going to France, offered me a seat in his special train. The railway station was carpeted with red; ministers, generals and other important people were gathered to shout "Viva el rey!" at the right moment; and, in short, all the ceremony usual on these occasions was observed.

While we were dining on the train, the King asked me very quietly:

"Have you the model of my bust on the train with you?"

I replied in the affirmative.

"What a pity," he went on, "it isn't in natural colours! But for that, as it is so very like me, I might have put it in the window, and my subjects would have cheered the bust as the train went by, and I could have stayed quietly at my dinner-table."

MARCH WIND . . .

By AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.

MARCH Wind, I love you.

Said the March Wind,
"My kiss is bitter,
My lips unkind,
And I love with a beauty
Hard to find."

March Wind, I love you.

Said the March Sun,
"His hates are many,
His love is one;
And none can run faster
Than he can run."

March Wind, I love you.

Said the March Rain,
"His grip is terror,
His fondling pain,
And he has taken oath with
The hurricane."

March Wind, I love you.

Said the March Sky,
"His heel is fiery,
Falcon his eye;
And his cloak is a swinging flame
Roaring by."

March Wind, I love you.

Said the Wind's Friend,
"His heart's in torment
And will not mend,
And he must go ever
To the world's end."

March Wind, I love you.

Said the March Air,
"Put by your yearning,
And bind your hair,
And seek him not in lovers' ways;
He is not there."

March Wind, I love you.

Said the Young Year,
"What?—are you crying?
O, hist, my dear.
He has gone on his journey,
And April's here."

PARSON AND POLICEMAN

By VICTOR L. WHITECHURCH

ILLUSTRATED BY CLAUDE BENDALL

I HAVE been Vicar of East Camford, a small village with a population numbering scarcely five hundred, for eight years, having been obliged, for reasons of health, to give up the more active sphere in which I worked as a younger man. So I am firmly established in that large category which comes under the heading of "the Country Parson." I suppose that, like many other men who have given up somewhat strenuous work, I have experienced in the last eight years what I may roughly call three distinct periods: first, that period when it was a relief to pass from a much-occupied life to more restfulness and leisure; then the revelation when, with physical health somewhat renewed, there came the disturbing feeling that one was, to a certain extent, on the shelf, had not enough to do, and looked back with regret to the old busy life; and lastly, the settling down finally to one's surroundings, the pursuit of a hobby or two outside the parochial round, and the formation of those habits which grow upon one with advancing years and which resent any disturbance. Not that, I suppose, I must call myself an old man, for I am not quite at the end of the "fifties."

One of these habits is the reading of light literature for an hour before I go to bed. We are early people in the country. Our two maids are usually in their rooms by half-past nine, my wife retires about ten, and it is then that I take up a novel or a detective story—I may as well admit that, like many of my cloth, I read detective stories with a great deal of pleasure—and settle down until the church clock—the church is close to the vicarage—striking eleven reminds me that it is time to light my candle and take my way upstairs.

In summer or in winter I spend this hour in my study. But there comes a time, in the early autumn, when the evenings are chilly, but when one has not begun fires. At such a period it is my custom to take my lamp, book and pipe into the kitchen, where the dying embers of the fire in the range give just that degree of warmth and cosiness which is desirable.

The church and vicarage at East Camford are off the main road and a little away from the village itself. They are reached by a narrow road, some couple of hundred yards in length, which turns out of the village street and ends abruptly at the lych-gate of the churchyard.

My house stands on the right of this road, a little way back from it, the space forming a semicircular drive, with a gate at either end opening into the road. The front and, if I can call it so, the back doors of my vicarage both open on to this drive, the kitchen being close to the "back" door, with its window towards the road. The kitchen is the only room which has a window on this side of the house, all the other windows looking on to the garden, which lies on two other sides. I mention this because, at night, the only light to be seen as one comes along the road is that from the kitchen window. It was the only light showing on this particular night in late September.

I settled myself down in the one wooden arm-chair in the kitchen, filled and lighted my pipe, and opened my book with pleasurable anticipation. It was a detective story which I had begun the night before, a story with the inevitable murder in the first chapter, followed by the inevitable number of persons whom the reader is to suspect, one after the other, of having committed the crime. I had already an inkling that the butler in the story knew a great deal more than he had told the police, and was looking forward to discovering that my suspicions were well founded.

I was soon absorbed. I had come to a chapter where a very astute detective-sergeant had grasped the same suspicion which had occupied my mind, and was, for the second time, interrogating the butler, when I heard the latch of one of the gates opening into the drive give a distinct click.

It was unusual. Visitors rarely call at a country vicarage between ten and eleven at night. Sometimes there is a case of urgent sickness, when the parson is suddenly wanted, but not often. The village, by this time, had gone to bed—our two public-houses close at ten, and they generally provide the last strollers through the village—a handful of men who go straight home.

I laid down my book, wondering. There followed the sound of footsteps coming up the drive, and then a tapping at the " back " door, close by.

I took the lamp—rather a large one—from the table, went to the door, unlocked and unbolted it, and threw it open, raising the lamp above my head as I did so.

And there stood a policeman.

" Oh, good evening, Jarvis. What——" And then I stopped short, for it certainly was not Jarvis, the constable stationed in the village.

" Excuse me, sir. But are you alone ? "

" Er—yes—certainly."

" Can I speak to you, sir ? On an urgent matter ? "

" Why, yes," I replied. " Won't you come in ? "

I happened to glance around as I spoke, and noticed a bicycle leaning against the gate—the handle-bars shining in the lamp-light. But there was no light on the machine at all.

The policeman followed me as I led the way into the kitchen. Then it suddenly flashed across my mind that he must have seen me before he knocked. I had not drawn the blind down, and anyone, even from the road, could easily see into the kitchen. Evidently the man noticed this as well, for the first thing he said was :

" Do you mind drawing down the blind, please, sir ? "

He spoke in a quiet, educated tone. But I have generally, in my somewhat scanty intercourse with the police, found them to be exceedingly superior men.

As I turned round from drawing the blind down, I observed, for the first time, the stripes on his sleeve.

" Won't you sit down—Sergeant ? " I said.

" Thank you," and he took a chair. " I apologise for disturbing you at this time of night. I am Detective-Sergeant Fraser, sir, of the Redborough Police."

" Oh, yes. I see," I replied. Redborough is our county town, about fifteen miles from East Camford. It struck me, as he spoke, as a strange coincidence. I had just been engrossed with a detective-sergeant of fiction, and here was one in the flesh. I looked at him with some interest. He had taken off his helmet and placed it on the floor.

He was a man of about thirty years of age, clean-shaven, fair-haired, keen grey eyes, with now and then a humorous twinkle in them. He had a rather strong face—I think it was a certain squareness about the chin that gave me this impression. He took from his pocket a large notebook, opened it, looked at it for a few seconds, and then went on :

" In the first place, sir, I want to ask if you have seen any suspicious-looking individual about your church this evening ? "

" No—not that I know of," I replied, a little surprised. " Who is he ? "

The Sergeant read from his note-book :

" Man of about thirty-five, thin, height somewhere around five feet ten inches, dark, sallow face, close-cut hair, dark moustache, large nose. When last seen was wearing a light grey suit and soft grey hat."

" No," I said as he finished reading the description. " But who is he ?—why——"

The Sergeant broke in :

" A thief, sir. Robbing churches, that's the tack he goes upon. It was bad enough breaking open the alms-boxes at Frilden and Little Marpleton, but he's done worse than that—he's taken the church plate and a valuable silver altar cross from St. Stephen's, Redborough."

" Good gracious ! " I exclaimed. " I hope you'll catch him, Sergeant. I know that cross. It was only presented to St. Stephen's last Easter. What an abominable scoundrel ! "

" He is, sir ! "

I suppose the habitual reading of detective fiction must have put the phrase into my mouth, for I found myself saying :

" And have you any clues, Sergeant ? I mean——"

He interrupted me :

" Oh, plenty of clues, sir," he said, with a smile. " We know our man all right ; you may be sure of that."

" But why have you come to me ? Do you suspect——"

Again he broke in, before I could finish the sentence.

"I was about to explain that, sir, if you will allow me. Information was given to us at Redborough early this evening that the man we want was seen making his way across the downs towards this village. The Superintendent at once detailed me for the job, and I started off on my bicycle. I was in uniform—as you see—and had no time to change into civilian clothes, as I prefer to do, for obvious reasons, when I am tracking a suspect."

My interest was more keenly aroused than ever. I had stepped out of the pages of fiction into the stern reality of a man-hunt.

"Go on," I said.

"Well, sir, to make a long story short, I made one or two inquiries as I rode along, and there seems to be no doubt that he came in this direction. Seeing a light in your window, I took the opportunity of calling to ask if you had set eyes on him."

"No, no. I wish I had—the rascal! But, now——?"

The Sergeant leaned forward, and spoke in a low, confidential tone of voice:

"It's like this, sir. You may depend upon it, he's making for Mansworth Junction—that's about six miles further on, isn't it? Ah! I thought so. He means to make his getaway by train."

"Oh! I see. And you'll follow him there?"

"I shall indeed, sir—without loss of time. Have you such a thing as a local time-table?"

"Yes, I have. In my study. I'll go and get it."

"Thank you, sir."

In a few minutes he was eagerly consulting the pages.

"Yes," he said; "here we are. Now, it's close on eleven now. Let me see. There's a train to London—an express—at eleven-forty-five, and a down-train to the West at twelve-thirteen that only stops to take up passengers. Ah, and here's another—to Oxford and the North, at twelve-thirty-five—and that's the last. Three trains, sir—and the question is, which one is he likely to take?"

"I should think, perhaps——"

"Either of them, sir," he broke in. "There's no knowing—and he's an artful card. If he were to see me before I caught sight of him, he'd very likely give me the slip and take neither. That's the worst of being in uniform. I wonder—— I hardly like to ask you, sir—but——"

"What?"

"Well, sir, you couldn't rig me up in civilian outfit, could you?"

I looked at him. Let me confess that the infection of the man-hunt was strong upon me. I am a clergyman, but I am also human. Besides, this scoundrel was sacrilegious—a robber of churches. It was more than ever my duty to assist the Law.

"I see what you mean," I said. "I've got a dark grey jacket-suit. I don't know if it would fit, but——"

He glanced at his wrist-watch.

"May I see it?" he asked. "There isn't much time."

"I'll get it," I replied, lighting my bedroom candle, which stood on the table. "By the way," I went on, stopping for a moment as I prepared to leave the room, "wouldn't it be as well to tell Jarvis? He might keep——"

"Jarvis?"

"Our village policeman."

"Oh, Jarvis—of course. I forgot for the moment that he was stationed here. No, sir—better not. This sort of detective work is a cut above his job, you see. I'd rather act on my own. You'll make haste, please, sir?"

A sleepy voice came through the open door to my dressing-room as I pulled out a drawer and extracted my old grey suit.

"Aren't you coming to bed, Charles? It's nearly eleven o'clock, and I'm sleepy."

"In a minute, dear."

I rushed downstairs again. The Sergeant had taken off his tunic and was removing his trousers.

"Here you are, Sergeant."

"Excellent."

"How about the collar, though?" I said. "I'm afraid I've only a clerical one with a stock."

"My dear sir," he replied, with a little laugh, "that will make the disguise all the more complete."

It certainly was a disguise. He looked no more like a policeman than I did. To tell the truth, I wished I could have gone with him to Mansworth Junction, and have seen him make the actual capture. As it was, I felt immensely pleased with the little part I was being allowed to play in the cause of justice.

A soft, dark-grey hat, which I took from the stand in the hall, served to complete the costume.

"I'm most grateful to you, sir, I'm sure," said the Sergeant. "And now I must slip



"It certainly was a disguise. He looked no more like a policeman than I did."

off. I'll send back your clothes, sir—of course."

"And yours?"

He smiled pleasantly.

"You might hand them over to Jarvis—in the morning, sir, if you kindly would. He knows me—of course. Tell him I said Sergeant Fraser would be glad to have them back. Good night, sir. And many thanks."

I saw him to the door, shook hands with him, and wished him good luck. He paused for a few seconds to light his bicycle lamp. His last words were:

"Just as a precaution, sir—you never know—if anyone *should* come to-night, you won't mention what has taken place? Thank you, sir."

And he rode off into the night. As he went, his bicycle lamp shed a ray of light on the ground, and I noticed the tracks made by the tyres. For rain had fallen that afternoon, and the ground was moist.

I locked the door, gathered his discarded tunic, trousers and helmet together, wondering, for the moment, where I should put them. For I did not, naturally, wish our servants to see them when they came down in the morning.

Opening out of the hall in my vicarage is a very small room—not much larger than a big cupboard—which we use for storing garden chairs and other paraphernalia. It has one diminutive window—a mere aperture—high up in the wall. I put the clothes, just as they were, into this little room, locked the door on the outside, and slipped the key into my pocket. Then I went to bed.

My wife soon lost her sleepiness when I told her what had happened, and we talked for some little time about it.

"I do hope that policeman will catch him, Charles."

"So do I, dear. It's really quite exciting. I little thought I should ever be called upon to assist the police in the execution of their duty. But now, I almost feel like a detective myself."

"Sleuth!" she murmured in reply. And then we went to sleep.

I AM, by long habit, an early riser. When the weather is inclement, I like to read, quietly, in my study, with the fresh, unclouded brain which belongs to the first hours of the day. But, if fine, it is my custom to take a walk, generally up one of the hills which flank the village. The sun was shining brightly when I awoke, a little before six, and I got up, dressed quickly, and went out—taking, as I often do, a pair of binoculars in my pocket.

As I mounted the somewhat steep slope of the hill I reflected on the exciting incident of the previous night, hoping that, by this time, the abominable robber of churches was safely under lock and key. I reached the summit of the hill, and sat down to enjoy, for a few minutes, the magnificent expanse of view. It was one of those crisp autumn mornings, without a semblance of mist, when everything is clear to the vision. The rain had entirely passed away, and there was scarcely a cloud in the sky.

I took out my binoculars and directed my gaze to distant objects. Far away, on the plain beneath me, I could pick out a fleecy white trail that marked a train steaming out of Mansworth Junction. Again I was reminded of the sergeant's visit.

Away on my right the main road to Redborough took its switchback way over the lower slopes of the downs—a black, tarred track. About a mile outside the village a large barn, belonging to one of the churchwardens, stood, solitary, close beside this road. With my glasses I could discern two men walking along the road in the direction of Redborough, nearing this barn.

Years of living in a village accustom one to observe many little traits to which a stranger is oblivious, and, even at that distance, I recognised one of the men—by his walk, for he was limping. It was Amos Weedon, an old labourer employed by my churchwarden, and I hazarded a pretty shrewd guess that the other was his son—also in the farmer's service. Therefore I was not surprised when I saw them turn aside from the road and enter the barn. Their work had called them there.

I lingered for a minute or two, taking desultory glances with my binoculars. Then I turned them once more on the barn.

To my surprise, I saw, at that moment, *three* men coming out into the open from the barn door. I say, to my surprise, because I was certain that only two men had gone in and that no one else had been in sight. I could also see that the third man wore very light-coloured clothing.

The three stood in the road for a few moments, and then the stranger began to walk towards the village—the others standing and, apparently, watching him. As I began the homeward descent, I own that my curiosity was aroused. Small things

interest one when one lives in a small, outlying community, and I wondered who the man was.

It was apparent that I should soon have a chance of seeing. We were converging on each other. I was making my way down to a spot where a by-road led from the main road to my vicarage. He was coming along the main road towards the same spot.

Presently I quickened my pace a little, with his head bent forward. I followed, not very far behind him.

Instinctively I looked down on the road—a few cart tracks—and an obvious bicycle track, made by Clincher tyres. I remember noticing that, at regular intervals, there was a small break in the pattern, as if the tyre had been worn or damaged at that part of its circumference.

But it was the stranger who occupied my attention most. Of course, I could only



"He walked steadily on in the direction of my house, and, as I drew nearer, it seemed to me that his wrists were strangely red."

for I began to see that he was likely to pass this spot before I arrived there. As a matter of fact, I was still quite fifty yards away when he reached it.

Suddenly he stopped short. The by-road which turned off from the main one was not tarred, but had an ordinary, old-fashioned surface—rather chalky—and showing the tracks of cart-wheels after the rain of the previous evening. Something in this road seemed to interest the stranger, for he turned down it, walking more slowly now, see his back. He was a tall, thin man, and the light grey suit he was wearing seemed a little small for him—his ankles showed beneath his trousers and his wrists beyond his sleeves. He walked steadily on now—in the direction of my house, and, as I drew nearer—his arms were hanging down—it seemed to me that his wrists were strangely red.

Right on to the vicarage gate he went—and so did the track of those cycle tyres. Then I suddenly grasped the fact that that

track must have been made by Sergeant Fraser when he had ridden there the previous night.

Into the Vicarage drive went the man, and then, as he heard my steps close behind him, he suddenly turned and faced me. And I confess I had a shock. For I remembered the Sergeant's description:

"Man of about thirty-five, thin, somewhere around five feet ten inches, dark, sallow face, close-cut hair, dark moustache, large nose—light grey suit and soft grey hat."

The only addition to this description was that the stranger wore neither collar nor tie, his right eye was almost closed, and around it spread an ugly, swollen bruise.

Without a doubt this was the sacrilegious thief. He had *not* gone to Mansworth Junction, after all. He had, evidently, hidden for the night in my churchwarden's barn—and here he was.

I do not boast of being a particularly brave man, but I have—I admit—sometimes flattered myself on my quick sense of judgment and my ability to present a calm front under trying circumstances—often a valuable asset to a parson. And I felt, excited as I was, that no outward sign of mine portrayed my feelings.

"Good morning, sir," he said, civilly enough.

"Good morning," I replied, a little stiffly. I said no more. I was thinking hard. How could I detain this scoundrel? In spite of his thinness he looked an ugly, formidable character. If only I could get hold of one of the maids, and send her quietly to fetch Jarvis——

"Excuse me, sir, but you are the Vicar, I suppose?"

"I am," I retorted. "What do you want with me?"

"Can I have a word with you, in private?"

I looked him straight in the face. I didn't want to be cowardly. *Could* I tackle him, if it came to the worst? Instinctively—it is a habit I have when thinking out a problem—my right hand slipped into my trousers' pocket. And then I had an inspiration.

"Very well," I said. "You had better come inside."

"Thank you, sir."

Looking back upon that moment, I pride myself that I was perfectly cool and collected. I opened my front door and preceded him into the hall—which I crossed rapidly. Taking the key from my pocket, I inserted it into the lock of the door of the little lumber-room, threw the door open, quite nonchalantly, and motioned him, with my arm, to enter before me. Entirely unsuspecting—so natural was my demeanour—he walked straight in, and in a second I had slammed the door and turned the key upon him. *I'd got him!*

"Hullo—sir——" came a muffled voice from within the room. "What do you——"

"What *is* happening, Charles?"

It was my wife, coming downstairs and speaking over the banisters.

"It's all right, dear—I've caught him."

"Who?"

"The man the Sergeant was after last night. He didn't get away by train. He's here—locked in the lumber-room."

He evidently *was* there. He had hold of the door-handle and was rattling it hard.

"Let me out, sir. You've made a great mistake. You'll be sorry for this."

"All right, my man," I shouted back. "I know who you are. And I'm going to send for a policeman."

There was silence for a moment. Then I distinctly heard what sounded like a chuckle.

"A policeman?"

"Yes," I retorted.

"Oh, very well, sir." He was speaking more quietly now, and, again, I seemed to hear a little laugh. "The sooner you do that the better, sir. I shall be quite ready for him."

"Jane!"—I turned to the two maids, whom the noise had brought from the kitchen. "Run as fast as you can go to Jarvis; tell him to come here at once, and bring his handcuffs. Tell him I've captured a—er—a burglar. Quick, now!"

Once more my prisoner laughed. I heard him distinctly. I planted myself close to the door, and waited. There was silence now within the little lumber-room. He knew I had the better of him.

"Oh, Charles!" said my wife. "How did you do it?"

"Quite simply, my dear. I'll tell you afterwards."

"I think you're wonderful," she exclaimed.

And so did I—a little. For it really was a smart capture.

In five minutes' time Jarvis came—panting for breath a little. He was a stoutish man, and had run all the way. Briefly I explained.

"He's wanted for breaking into churches," I said. "I advise you to be careful, Jarvis—he's—he's rather desperate, I fancy. I'll stand by you as best I can."

"That you, Jarvis?" sounded from within.

Jarvis gave a start.

"Hul-*lo!*" he ejaculated. And turned



"Out came the man—no longer dressed in the ill-fitting grey clothes, but clad in the trousers, tunic and helmet which the Sergeant had been wearing the previous night."

Jarvis stolidly produced a pair of handcuffs.

"Give me the key, please, sir."

the key and threw the door open.

I was astounded. Out came the man—no longer dressed in the ill-fitting grey

clothes, but clad in the trousers, tunic and helmet which the Sergeant had been wearing the previous night. And, somehow, he looked quite natural in them.

"Thanks, Jarvis."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed our policeman. "Why—it's Sergeant Fraser!"

"That's right."

"He's *not*," I said indignantly. "I know Sergeant Fraser. He was here last night. I——"

"Oh, he was, was he, sir? I guessed so when I saw the tracks of my bicycle he stole, leading up to your house. That's what I wanted to ask you about. Leastways, is *that* what he called himself, sir? Oh, he's a cool hand—is that blighter! Fancy that!" and he grinned.

"Jarvis," I said, "who *is* this man?"

"It's quite all right, sir. He's Detective-Sergeant Fraser, from Redborough."

"Do you mean to tell me, then," I said, "that the man who came here last night—and asked me to lend him civilian clothes so that he could more easily capture—well—that *he* was the man he said he was after—the rascal that robbed the alms-boxes at Frilden and Little Marpleton—and who stole the altar cross from St. Stephen's?"

"Oh, was that the yarn he pitched you—about *me*, I suppose? Clever, sir. He knew he'd get your sympathy if he mentioned church robberies. Oh, no! Nothing of the kind, sir. He's the under-cashier at Murrell's bank at Redborough. They've had their eye on him—for embezzlement—for some time, but he managed to make his getaway just as they got the final proof. We knew he hadn't boarded a train at Redborough, and also that he had been seen, making his way on foot, somewhere in this direction. We warned all stations, and some of us went out after him. I came on him—overtook him last night on the road just outside this village. But he showed fight, and laid me out with a heavy stick he was carrying. When I came to my senses I found myself tied by ankles and wrists, lying in a barn, in my under-clothes, with his suit by me. I only got away about an hour ago, when two men happened to come into the barn and set me free. Then I came down to the village to get a bit of food and to see Jarvis here, but I noticed the tracks of my own cycle, where the fellow had turned off the main road—and traced them to your vicarage. I'd be glad if you'd tell me, sir, exactly what happened last night."

I was mortified and ashamed. I had been so thoroughly deceived, and had thought myself so clever and astute all the time.

"Yes," I said, "of course I'll tell you—while you join us at breakfast. For you need it, I'm sure."

"Thank you, sir. I could do with a meal—after rather a bad night in that old barn."

I caught my wife's eye. I'm afraid she didn't regard me as a hero just then. The maids—who were still in the hall—were giggling, and Jarvis, who stood there, dangling his unused handcuffs, had an obvious grin on his face. I felt what was due from me—before them all.

"And, Sergeant," I went on, "let me apologise to you very sincerely for the reception I have given you."

Sergeant Fraser smiled.

"Oh, that's all right, sir. I must really compliment you on a very pretty bit of strategy. I couldn't have done it better myself. Only I wish you could have detained the fellow who called on you last night in a similar manner!"

"I wish I had," I replied. "And I only hope he'll be caught yet."

It was some satisfaction for me to know, a few days afterwards, that the man *was* taken—still wearing my clothes and masquerading as a clergyman. But my pride had suffered a severe fall—of which I am constantly being reminded whenever I meet Police-Constable Jarvis in my parish. He is quite civil—but there is a twinkle in his eye and a broad grin on his face, which clearly stamps his opinion of his Vicar.

FULL MEASURE

By DUDLEY HOYS

ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT

THE searing heat had drained out of the day, taking with it the sky's steely glitter and the quivering haze from the *maidan*. With startling suddenness the sun dipped down, leaving shafts of green and purple and pink curving over the horizon like fantastic fingers, struggling to keep their hold upon the world. Odd palms went dull and metallic under the waning light. The Tigris changed to a cool silver.

The music of sunset was silence, a grateful silence it seemed to Mark Linton, as though the earth held an unspoken prayer of thanks for relief from burning hours. A fancy of his, of course, unbreathed to anybody, since he was terrified of being thought a dreamer. The only sound that broke the hush was the throb of the ship's engines, and even they appeared to tone down a little, out of respect to the spell of the moment.

Leaning against the rail, Linton watched the ship's wake trailing away in a bubbling, sinuous curve. Very soon the s.s. *Saluki* would be mooring for the night. Passengers had often asked him why the Iraq Steamship Company's vessels never negotiated the river after dark. Though the question cropped up with enough frequency to irritate a saint, he always replied, in his patient and pleasant way, that it wasn't worth the risk. Submerged banks were constantly shifting. Besides, the width of the river varied so much—here a mile, there a hundred yards. Most of the idle questions put by passengers were directed to him, mainly because he had a face that looked obliging. The captain and the second officer struck them as more inaccessible in appearance, and the two Scottish engineers were obviously oysters.

Maybe his modest, obliging ways were appreciated by the passengers. But they were a drag on his career. Thrustfulness, self-assertion, and luck were needed to take a man far in the Iraq Company. With those, there could be hardly any limit to advancement. The thought made him sigh, as he leaned over the rail and watched the flowing river. He could quote dozens of his contemporaries as examples. There had been Kemp, now commanding the *Star of the East*, belonging to the Indian and Oriental Line, the parent concern of the Iraq Company. And Walters, Medwright, Vassall——.

"Lucky devils. Or was it something more than luck?"

His wide, rather humorous mouth pursed in a puzzled fashion. Sometimes he wondered if his inability to get on was entirely his own fault. He hadn't exactly been a failure. But to be first officer of the *Saluki*, at the age of thirty-six, was certainly nothing to boast about. The same job on an ocean-going boat was a different matter. But to do nothing except ply between Basra and Baghdad, month after month, year after year, savoured of the little tuppenny pleasure steamers at home.

"I'm a fresh-water sailor, no more." He gave a rueful smile. For that, at least, he could not be blamed. After the War, the Company had started this river service, asking for the names of those who knew the varying course of the Tigris. Not realising how it might bind his future, he had sent his name in, and later found himself posted to the *Saluki* as first officer. The job proved to be an unescapable rut. Once they had obtained their personnel, the Indian and Oriental Line ceased to be interested in what, to them, was a mere side-shoot of their activities.

When the skipper of the *Saluki* retired, he had very reasonably expected to step into his shoes. Instead, he had to welcome a new skipper in the shape of Hillier, a favourite nephew of one of the Company's directors. He consoled himself with a whimsical shrug, and served the new man faithfully.

"Just missed again," he told himself when the news arrived. This trick of Fate was like those she had played on him during the War, serving as a R.N.V.R. lieutenant. For instance, he might have gained considerable kudos at the crossing of the Diala, volunteering to swim with a line to the men cut off and hard pressed by Turks on the other bank. Only he was wounded the moment he entered the water, and the man who tried next got over and earned fame instead.

But nothing embittered him. "Take life as you find it," he would say, and certainly he had laughed aside any regrets until the last fortnight. Then something happened to break the monotony of the river trip with a vengeance. It made him painfully dissatisfied with himself, gave him long spells of pondering, such as occupied him this evening.

While the green light darkened and the faint, garlic-tinged smell of cooking drifted down from the lascars' galley, while the native bos'n shouted guttural orders in the usual routine of heaving to and the swish of the water gave a kind of accompaniment to the bustle, Linton stared with longing eyes towards a deck-chair, where he knew Coral Westly was lounging.

It was seldom the *Saluki* carried white women. Her usual passenger list consisted of a sprinkling of political officials and Air Force officers, the rest being native traders. But this trip was in the nature of a private cruise, in obedience to the instructions of Sir Roger Westly, general manager of the line. His daughter, he informed them, was bent on seeing the historic places of Iraq. The *Saluki* would carry her, together with her married sister, Mrs. Craig, and Mr. Craig. Arrangements had been made for other passengers who had booked this trip to take an alternative boat, so that his daughters could have complete privacy.

"Of all the infernal idiocy!" Hillier had said, when he first received the information. "D'you realise what this means, Linton? We shall be like glorified taxi-drivers, taking our fares wherever they want to go, and stopping wherever they want to stop! We may take cargo, but no other passengers. Does the old fool think this is a private yacht?"

"Evidently, sir. But as he happens to be the general manager——"

"That's the trouble. There's no jibbing. I've got to do as I'm told. Wish I could fall sick this trip, and leave to you the delightful occupation of being a sort of tame guide."

But the moment he saw Coral Westly, the captain of the *Saluki* changed his opinion. She had brought a breath of spring, a vitalising charm to life.

Pondering now, Linton could picture her as she had embarked that evening at Basra. He had given one glance at her married sister and brother-in-law, then stared in sheer adoration at Coral while she walked down the gangway to be greeted by Hillier. Her violet eyes alone, he thought, were enough to turn any man's head.

Later, he discovered that the charm of her appearance was rivalled by the charm of her nature. Perhaps he idealised, having seen scarcely a dozen white women in the last three years. But from the instant she came on board he was filled with a worship that almost hurt him. Not that he dared have any hopes. At the very beginning he was frank with himself.

"Mark Linton, you can dream if you like, but don't go beyond that. You're the first officer of a little river boat, a nobody, getting on towards middle age. Have you ever done anything notable? No. She's young, beautiful, and the daughter of the general manager. Remember that, and don't be mad enough to build castles in Spain."

But it was hard to obey his own warning. Constantly meeting her and talking to her on the voyage up-stream became both a joy and an agony. For his own sake, he decided, it would be better to avoid her as much as possible. Yet circumstances seemed to mock him, for this pleasure trip had reduced duties to a minimum. Every day they would stop somewhere, the party going ashore to see historic places, and he could not refuse to take his share in accompanying them. He had escorted her round Amara, where was still preserved the secret of a certain etching upon silver, he had shown her Ezra's tomb, and the ill-fated ruins of Kut, still speaking eloquently of Townshend's gallant defence. And his love for her, love that could never be satisfied, had to be imprisoned, great, pulsing waves of it, while he hid his feelings under a polite smile and a voice that sometimes shook despite itself.

With Hillier, he could see, things were different. He might be only captain of a small river boat. But as the nephew of a director, he was entitled to value himself a great deal more highly than his first officer.

So Linton understood why Hillier had the courage to worship openly. Every available minute he spent with Coral, and it was obvious she did not dislike his attentions.

"And he's an awfully decent sort, a million times more worthy of her than I am. They ought to suit each other perfectly."

As the days passed, and Hillier's air grew



"Linton stared in sheer adoration at Coral while she walked down the gangway to be greeted by Hillier."

Studying them together, Linton had admitted that they made a splendid pair. Hillier was seven years younger than himself, handsome, athletic, entertaining. Rumour had it that he was his uncle's heir.

a shade more intimate, his excursions ashore with her more frequent, Linton forced himself to face the truth. She had chosen the better man. There was no other conclusion to be made.

"My job," he told himself doggedly, "is to be glad for both their sakes. Love shouldn't be selfish. I ought to be delighted that she's found her happiness. Later on, if they get married, perhaps I shall be awarded the consolation prize of commanding the boat, and while they're growing contentedly old together in England, I shall still be jogging up and down this mosquito-cursed river, with the same old smell of oil and garlic, the same old searing dusty days and coloured sunsets, the same old cargo of Air Force stores, melons and grain." He smiled wryly. "And probably that scoundrel Joseph will still be chief steward and bottle-washer, cheating everybody as ever and earning forgiveness with his ridiculous grin." Here his grey eyes twinkled. Of all Goanese stewards, Joseph was undoubtedly the most unprincipled and most amusing. Life on the *Saluki* would have been much duller without him.

He nodded, then emerged from his reverie at the sound of the captain's voice and walked over to the little group farther along the deck. Hillier and the Craigs had joined Coral, and they were lounging comfortably and talking.

"Look here, we shall be putting in at Ctesiphon to-morrow morning to have a wander around the Arch. You'll join us?"

"With pleasure, sir," said Linton dutifully, knowing quite well what lay behind the invitation. It would be his job to pilot the Craigs, while Hillier rambled off with Coral.

"It's very wonderful, isn't it?" asked Mrs. Craig.

"Magnificent. The finest piece of architecture in the country. And despite the passage of centuries, it's remarkably well preserved. The Chosroes, the dynasty that put it up, must have had a genius for building. There are ghosts of history in every shadow of it, ghosts that seem to whisper of past romance."

Listening to Hillier, Linton felt generous envy. "I could never put things like that," he thought. "At least, the idea might come into my mind, but I shouldn't be able to turn it into words." He glanced at Coral, noting her expression as Hillier talked. A tinge of excitement at the prospect of to-morrow's trip had made her lean forward, and her slim face was under the full rays of the electric lamp above. There was that about her beauty that made Linton catch his breath.

If only he had a chance. If only he were like Hillier. If only he were not quite such a complete nobody. But these wishes were useless. He might as well sigh for the moon, now a great, shining globe rising up through the purple velvet of the night.

Yet this forlorn yearning could not be suppressed. It came to him that if he could do something for her, render her some service, there would be a little relief. To love like this, storing it up as a miser stores his money, without spending the smallest tittle of it, seemed unbearable. But what could he do? Only pray that she might be happy with Hillier. There was nothing she wanted from him, no tribute he could pay to the shrine of his adoration.

The thought goaded continually, so it was with pitiful eagerness that he seized on a remark of hers when the party were sitting on deck after dinner. She had mentioned her interest in natural history, a subject he had been fond of since childhood. Here was a tiny way of pleasing her.

"There isn't much wild life on the Tigris, I'm afraid, apart from jackals and vultures. Sometimes we come across a queer bird among the marshes, a big, bluish thing like a parrot, and it seems utterly dumb. Occasionally a golden eagle flies over from the Persian hills——"

"A golden eagle?" she said, her eyes bright with interest. "I've never seen one. Do tell me all about them."

Linton felt a ridiculous elation. For once, he was cutting Hillier out, though it could be only for a very brief while. "They're splendid birds," he began, "and they really look golden in the sunlight, with their tapering wings spread and——"

"The natives are playing such a funny game." Mrs. Craig, who had returned from fetching a wrap, brought an unintentional interruption. "They've got a piece of canvas spread on the deck, with figures on it, and they're shaking some dice and playing more earnestly than any bridge fiends I've met at home."

Hillier uttered a sharp exclamation, and glanced at Linton. Mrs. Craig had described a native game, somewhat after the style of Crown and Anchor, which he had forbidden on the *Saluki*. More than once it had caused trouble among the crew, some of them hot-tempered Arabs who could not gamble without becoming dangerous. But despite his order, and the confiscation of the cloth and dice whenever they were

caught at it, they still contrived to play on the quiet.

"Mr. Linton," he said, "please go along and stop them at once. If it happens again, I shall have to make an example of some of them."

"Very good, sir." The first officer got up reluctantly. "Just my luck," he thought, sick with disappointment. The one and only time he had a chance to entertain Coral, to meet her on the common ground of a common interest, had been snatched away.

Feeling he could run amok among the crew, he went forward. They heard him coming, and tried to hide the evidence, but they were a second too late. He picked up the cloth and snatched away the dice from Joseph, who was evidently banker. The steward's brown, rascally face looked more alarmed than his offence warranted.

Linton scowled at them fiercely, but they knew him too well to expect trouble. His good-nature was a byword among the crew, and their liking for him drew better service out of them than mere discipline.

"You'll end up by being hanged, Joseph," he said with mock severity, and turned away. When he rejoined the party, they were deep in a topic on which Hillier could speak freely, and no chance to resume his chat about Nature with Coral offered itself. Hillier held the field, and her expression, Linton told himself, could not have been mistaken by the most stupid observer.

"Oh, well, he's a good fellow, and deserves his luck."

Later they took a stroll along the deck, Hillier and Coral leading, Craig and his wife next. Linton walked behind, alone, and it struck him that this was typical of things. The darkness hid his wistful smile. His hopeless yearning for Coral had weakened his usual philosophy.

But presently he lifted his head resolutely, and his eyes saw the stars. Coral was like them, remote, utterly beyond his reach. He should be grateful for her passing beauty, for the dreams she had inspired, and not complain because the impossible was denied him. There was some comfort in the thought, though there would have been a great deal more could he have found vent for his adoration in serving her, however humbly.

Here he stopped. "It's no use craving for more than I deserve," he said, and looked out at the dully gleaming river, while the longings for what could never be grew more peaceful, under the touch of the night-breeze caressing his forehead.

The mighty arch of the Chosroes loomed before them as they plodded through the dust, its alcoves and mouldings picked out by the glaring sun, the shadows of its wide span holding a silence of mystery. They had walked three miles from the river, halting occasionally for a rest in this heat that seemed to leap up and buffet the skin. The men carried rifles, not from any fear of marauders, but because Craig had suggested that they might shoot a jackal or two. He was of the type that cannot be happy without some kind of hunting, so to please him they agreed.

As usual, Hillier had taken possession of Coral, wandering on ahead and leaving Linton to tell Craig and his wife whatever they wanted to know about the place. They were chiefly anxious to hear of Townshend's retreat from Ctesiphon, and as Linton had been present on a gunboat at the battle, he managed to make his account pretty vivid, though it was difficult to point out landmarks in this featureless stretch of desert.

Reaching the shade of the arch, they found Hillier and Coral waiting for them. She looked cool and delicious in a simple white frock. Even a topee, most trying headgear for the gentle sex, lost its hard materialism when worn by her.

"Come along, you people," she said, smiling at the red-faced Craig. "You three are looking as if you are sorry you came."

"Phew!" Craig dabbed at him with a handkerchief. "I am—almost. Architecture and history are all very well, but they're not worth the loss of a stone. I'm visibly reduced. I'd give a lot for a large, iced beer."

"Barbarian! Fancy thinking of beer in a romantic spot like this!" With a little silvery laugh she turned away and stared out across the desert. This huge pile of masonry, standing solitary among the emptiness, scarcely seemed real. In a way, it was out of place, surprising to the senses as well as to the eyes. Its presence made them realise how very dead and far back were the ancient civilisations that once had flourished here.

They were silent awhile, all under the influence of this symbol of the past, except Linton. As ever, he was watching his divinity, grateful even to be near her.

Hillier, he felt, was the most fortunate man in the world.

"Hullo! What's that?" Craig suddenly pointed westward. "A jackal, surely? Can't you see it? That brown blur moving over there."

Staring intently, they made out a tiny shape, indistinct but apparently of a fawnish colour, stirring on the yellow grey dust.

"H'm. It may be a jackal, or a pariah," said Hillier, "but it's too far to hit. At least seven or eight hundred yards, I should think."

"There's no harm in having a go. Let's all try a pot at it, and one of us might be lucky." He raised his rifle.

Hillier shrugged his shoulders. "Suppose you knock it over? You don't mean to tell me you are going to fag all that distance to fetch it? It may be farther away than seven or eight hundred. This heat haze distorts things so much."

"Oh, I don't mind." The prospect of shooting something had made Craig forget his weariness. "Come on. A volley from the three of us will stand a better chance than a single shot."

To humour him, Hillier and Linton raised their rifles. The discharges were almost simultaneous, splitting the hush and echoing harshly under the great span of the arch. Rose a puff of dust near their vague target, and it vanished.

"We hit it?" said Craig excitedly. "But it's disappeared. Now, how the dickens could that have happened?"

"It was probably on the edge of a nullah," said Linton, "There are a lot out in this desert, I believe, but you can't spot them at a distance because their edges are flush with the ground, and the soil is all this drab tint."

"Then it has probably tumbled to the bottom, and I'm going to see. Anybody coming with me?" he asked.

"No, thanks," said Hillier, "I prefer the shade." He sat down beside Coral and her sister, who were resting against a corner of masonry cooled by the shadow.

"I'll come." Linton made an amiable grimace. "Personally, I don't think it would be worth walking half a mile in this heat, even to retrieve the rarest specimen on earth, but——" He broke off abruptly, gazing ahead with eyes that had gone grave in an instant.

From the spot where their quarry had disappeared sprang up a twirling line of dust. It lengthened, threw forward its ends, came speeding towards them in a wide crescent, now and again revealing dark shapes beneath.

Hillier leapt to his feet. Like Linton, he recognised the wall of dust as a band of mounted Arabs in their usual skirmishing formation.

"What on earth is this?" said Craig. "I say," he added quickly, "the beggars are charging us!"

Coral and her sister went a trifle pale, and looked at Hillier. He tried to appear confident.

"Yes, they're Arabs, right enough. They won't charge. They'll lengthen out and encircle us. Strange. None of the tribes have given any trouble for a long time. A policy of bribing the strongest has kept them quiet and harmless, otherwise I wouldn't have dreamed of bringing you out here to-day. We've nothing to fear," he went on steadily. "I can guess what happened. They were probably gathered in a big nullah, and took us to be hostile tribesmen shooting at them. When they discover their mistake, they'll salaam and clear off."

Despite the quiet words, his strained look was noticed by Craig.

"Suppose they don't clear off? Shall we——" He tapped his rifle significantly.

"For God's sake, no! Keep still. Let them see who we are, and we should be safe."

The little party stood together in silence, watching that line of dust that had grown to a ring, closing in upon them on every side. The two girls were steadier now, relieved by what Hillier had said. Craig seemed just pleasantly excited. Only Hillier and Linton realised their danger, and their eyes met for an instant.

Soon they saw the thin and hardy ponies, each ridden by a tall form with head-dress and burnous swaying in the dust. Nearer and nearer drew the circle, until every thin, yellow face was distinct. There must have been three or four hundred horsemen, and as they closed their expressions became visible. Sight of them was far from reassuring.

"By Jove!" Craig stirred uneasily. "What a devilish-looking crowd! They must have realised who we are by now, and they don't seem a bit pacified." Instinctively he drew his wife behind him with a protective gesture, and Hillier took Coral by the arm.

At last the circle halted. The dust-clouds

subsided. The tribesmen sat like statues, but their eyes were full of menace, glinting redly. One of them, evidently their leader, rode forward. His eyes, too, belied the impassive set of his face. He came up to the party and spoke.

Coral and the Craigs could not understand a word, but they watched their companions' expressions. They saw Linton and Hillier start. They saw the Arab wave his hand towards the desert, heard his voice rise, then Hillier reply.

Linton turned to them, and he was breathing jerkily. "It's worse than we thought. Much worse. That little blur we took to be a jackal was a tribesman's head, moving above a nullah. We killed him."

The two girls gave gasps of horror.

"Worse still," he went on quickly, "it happened to be the Sheikh's brother. This man here is the sheikh of a section of the Wahhaki, and he's out for revenge."

"This is dreadful!" Craig stared round wildly at the impenetrable ring of tribesmen. "But can't you make him understand that it was a mere accident, and that we're terribly sorry? Surely the man doesn't think we did it deliberately? Tell him we're as upset as he is, and that——"

But Linton was not listening. The Sheikh had started speaking again. In his low-toned, guttural dialect he was demanding the man who had shot his brother.

Hillier translated. "I've explained exactly what happened," he continued, "but it's no use."

He turned to the Sheikh, repeating that all three had fired.

The dark eyes flashed. From the thin lips came an answer that made Hillier and Linton burst into a torrent of protests. They were of no avail, it seemed. The leader of the Wahhaki raised a hand, and there was something relentless in the gesture.

"For Heaven's sake, what's happening?" demanded Craig, alarmed by their obvious dismay.

There was a pause. Intuition had warned Coral and her sister vaguely. Very still and pale, they waited for Hillier to speak. At last he told them the cold truth.

"He says that apologies won't bring his brother back to life. With these people, as you may know, it's always a case of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. As we don't know which of us killed him, he says one of us must pay the penalty."

The girls swayed. Craig's fists clenched.

"What! Is the fellow a murderer, a——"

"He says we must choose among ourselves," went on Hillier huskily. "He gives us until the shadow from the arch crosses that line of footprints. It means about five minutes. I've reasoned with him, done my best. But his blood's up, and threats or entreaties won't make the slightest impression."

At that, Mrs. Craig would have fallen had not Coral's supporting arm held her. Even in this crisis, Linton found time for adoration. She was acting as he had expected. Though white and tense, she controlled herself with quiet gallantry.

Not so with Craig. "But we must do something!" he cried. "D'you think we can submit to this? Are you going to agree to one of us being murdered in cold blood, all because of a shocking accident? Why, we're scarcely three miles from the boat, and not eighteen miles from Baghdad! We've got rifles. Tell him to clear off, or we'll use them!"

"And be wiped out at once." Linton pointed to the circle. "How many should we drop? Half a dozen, perhaps. Then they'd be on us."

Craig drew a long breath. It was the truth, and he knew it. "But he can't really mean what he says He's trying to scare us."

"Look at him," said Hillier, and there was no hope in his voice.

Glancing at those burning, merciless eyes, Craig was silenced. He stepped back, shivering.

Coral moistened her lips. "Can't you tell him that killing one of us won't do any good, and that it will only bring swift punishment on him? Say we will pay his brother's family heavily for their loss. It's very terrible, but it was an accident, and I don't see how he can think otherwise."

"That's what I've explained. I offered money, knowing how it sways these tribesmen. It hadn't the least effect. But I'll try again." Hillier turned to the Sheikh and spoke with desperate eagerness. He might have been addressing a stone. Only the burning eyes moved, and the hatred in them was bordering on madness.

When he had finished, the Sheikh said a few words. Hillier made a hopeless gesture.

"I can't move him. He says we must be quick and choose. Otherwise, when that shadow reaches the footprints, he will spare

nobody. It's no use trying to put it off. He means what he says, and we've got to submit. One of us——" He choked a little. "One of us three must pay the penalty for that unlucky volley."

Craig was quiet now. He appeared dazed, unable to grasp the full truth. To Coral, supporting her sister, the whole scene seemed incredible, a nightmare from which she would soon awake to the clean, safe sanity of her cabin on the boat.

Linton glanced at the two girls, and any self-pity was lost in his pity for them. Surely this yellow statue would relent? He looked up at the Sheikh, then lowered his head. He might as well search for a glimpse of humanity in this great pile of masonry as in those savage eyes.

"Toss if you like," he said. "Or we can use the dice I took off the crew yesterday." He pulled out of his pocket a little wooden cylinder and an ivory cube.



"'Surely they won't kill him in front of us?' gasped Craig."

"We'd better toss," said Hillier, producing a rupee. His hand shook, but in face of the inevitable he bore himself well. "That shadow's not far off."

Hillier looked at Craig. "What do you say?"

By a great effort Craig managed to speak. "The—the dice, I think."

"Very well. Who is to shake first?"

They stared at each other. Then Craig stretched out his hand. Linton gave him the cylinder.

"The quicker we get it over, the better," said Hillier dully. "One shake each."

Coral was shuddering now. Linton dared not look at her. He hesitated, took a glance at the motionless circle, at the leader waiting like some expectant vulture, and made his throw. It was a two.

Craig and Hillier could not speak. Their



Their eyes dilated, Coral and her sister leaned forward. Even the leader of the Wahhaki lowered his mask-like face to watch, evidently understanding what they were about. In a sickening, breathless hush, Craig stooped, shaking the dice again and again, his temples pulsing with apprehension. At last he tilted the cylinder. A cry of relief broke from his wife and he gave a shuddering sigh. He had turned up a six.

Hillier braced himself, took up the dice. Linton saw Coral sway, saw her violet eyes go strange and piteous. The next second Hillier had thrown the little cube on to the dust, showing a four. He passed the cylinder to Linton.

"May you have a five," he said, with a splendid attempt at a smile.

hands clutched at their rifles. Linton could read their thoughts, saw that they were on the brink of refusing to give him up. It would be madness, meaning the destruction of them all. So he swung round immediately.

"You can take me. I am the one."

Mrs. Craig was crying. He heard Coral make a queer little sound. It stirred him beyond all else. He went up to her abruptly, raised her hand to his lips and kissed it with a very great reverence. His smile was strange. Then he took Craig and Hillier by the hand in turn, and only their horror-stricken eyes could say good-bye.

At once half a dozen tribesmen rode down upon him and seized his arms.

"Surely they won't kill him in front

of us?" gasped Craig, and his rifle moved.

Hillier gave a helpless groan. Though it was maddening to stand by and do nothing, yet it was the only way. Had the three been alone, he would have fought to the bitter end. But with Coral and her sister here——

He covered his face, fearing to see rifles raised against that defenceless figure. But no shot rang out, and when he looked up he saw Linton pinioned and mounted behind a tribesman, in the middle of a line sweeping away. Then his most agonising fears were realised. The Wahhaki, he knew, and as Linton knew, worshipped torture almost as a religion.

A curving wave beneath her bows, the *Saluki* was racing full steam ahead for Baghdad. The ship's wireless had been sending out frantic messages telling the story and urging the authorities to dispatch a squadron of 'planes at once to swoop after the Wahhaki. As Hillier had said while the little party hurried back to the boat with tragic faces, there was still a chance for Linton. Aeroplanes might overtake the tribe and rescue their prisoner before it was too late.

He said this to comfort them. But in his own heart he could find no hope. He was pacing the deck now, heavy-eyed and gloomy, staring back at the great arch, swiftly receding into the heat haze as the boat ploughed noisily up-stream. Near by, Coral's slim figure stood leaning against the rail. Her sister had collapsed on reaching the boat, and for awhile the need of her assistance had helped to dull the raw edge of thought. Now she had come back to the deck and given way to the troubles that would not be denied. That last scene was stamped with vivid outline in her mind. She saw the grim line moving across the dust, and Linton bound, turning his head in a final farewell. He had seemed steadier than any of them.

Was there a chance for him, a ghost of a chance? The tribe might ride a long way before—before they attempted to touch their prisoner, knowing they would soon be pursued. If the aeroplanes went up at once, they could overtake the Wahhaki within a very little time.

Here the face of their leader rose before her, and she shivered. Would he let anything baulk his lust for revenge? The vision of those burning eyes, inhuman as a wolf's, gave a certain and horrible answer to the question.

Mark Linton had been very quiet and calm. That was like him. He was different from Brian Hillier, shy, modest, setting no value on himself. He had kept out of the way, evidently imagining that Brian meant everything to her. He had been wrong, of course, quite wrong. Perhaps Brian's confident, proprietorial air had given him the impression, and because she sympathised with a man whose life must be dull in this empty country, she had let Brian step a shade beyond the ordinary line of acquaintanceship. That was all. Mark Linton had appealed to her in another manner entirely. At first she had wanted to laugh at his awkward diffidence. But after a day or two that same diffidence touched her with curious force. She had wished that he would be less unselfish, less anxious to let Brian talk to her alone. She ought to have helped him over his diffidence. But now——

In her reverie the past had drawn a kindly veil over the present. It was ripped off abruptly, and again the sickening scene at the arch of Ctesiphon came back to torture. Her fingers gripped tightly around the rail, and a shiver ran through her. Yet youth and inexperience came to her aid. With only her knowledge of comfortable, well-ordered life in England and India to draw upon, her brain fought against believing that even the most barbaric of men would do what the Sheikh of the Wahhaki had threatened. He had looked savage, merciless. That was due to the life these wanderers led. But he was a human being, and——

Her lips moved in a silent prayer for Linton's safety. The courage of youth refused to cease hoping.

"Surely he won't be allowed to suffer?" she murmured passionately, struggling with the desperate fear that clutched and held. It came to her that this fear was more personal, more vital, than any she had known before, even the suspense of the night when her sister had been at the crisis of pneumonia three years ago. What might never have happened, or at least have taken months to bring realisation, was revealed to her in a flash by the crucible of disaster. Mark Linton mattered to her, mattered so much that her heart seemed to stop beating.

She looked up at the glaring sky, her straining eyes searching for the rescuing squadron. The steely arc was empty. She

looked ahead to where the towering masts of the Baghdad wireless station reared themselves, strange contrast to the gold dome of Khadimain glittering far behind, and an agony of impatience goaded her. Why was the boat so slow? Why weren't the aeroplanes racing to the rescue?

Then her gaze came to rest on the fingers he had kissed so reverently, and a wave of emotion choked her throat. That strange, parting smile of his was before her, like the echo of some forlorn music returning to touch chords that were nameless. Memory summoned up every tiny detail about him with a startling clearness. It was as if an opaque curtain had been drawn aside, suddenly revealing how near he had been to her all the time. Dawned the knowledge seldom born except in suffering; it was only too true that people put no value upon the fine and simple things of life, paid no heed to them, until they were lost. She had felt interested in Mark in a casual way, true. But she had been blind to reality.

Sounded a voice behind her, and she turned to face Hillier.

"A message has just come through from the Air Force that they've sent up three 'planes." He gave a comforting smile. "We won't stop hoping."

She nodded mutely. Easy enough for him to be calm and steady. He might be upset, yes. But his was not that vital, personal suffering. Why, he looked scarcely more troubled than his impassive crew. They knew the whole story, every detail, and yet they showed no distress.

Anger flamed up in her, only to fade. She was judging unfairly. How could they be expected to care in such a measure?

"No, we won't stop hoping," she said, and tried to return his smile.

"The Wahhaki are a vindictive crowd, but they'd sell their souls for money. The idea of getting a ransom may have cooled them down, and——" He broke off, swung round on Joseph, the Goanese steward, who had come up and touched his forehead. "Yes, what is it?"

The steward's usual rascally grin was missing. He seemed excited, frightened, almost tearful. He stood and looked at them, opening his mouth and getting out no words.

"Well?" said Hillier impatiently.

"Captain sahib, I tell you something." He hesitated, burst into a torrent of broken English. "All crew know what happen ashore. All know that Sheikh's brother is killed, and he demand one white sahib for vengeance. So you and Linton sahib and Craig sahib toss dice, same dice Linton sahib take from me yesterday when he catch us playing game." His brown face twisted dismally. "I am cheat! One dice for me have lead inside, and only come up four, five, six. One dice for other men have lead inside, and only come up one, two, three. Linton sahib take both." He stopped shaking with fright and distress.

For the moment Hillier did not realise what lay behind this admission. But to Coral its significance flashed down as a blinding light.

"Don't you see?" she cried. "Don't you see? You and Gordon tossed with the high dice! And the other he kept for himself, knowing that——"

"Oh, my God! I understand now! We couldn't turn up less than four! And he must have palmed the other one and used it. He couldn't turn up more than three." Hillier drew a sharp breath. "He sacrificed himself deliberately! But why? Why?"

Coral's hand went to her breast. No need now to puzzle over that strange smile. He had done it for her sake, changed the dice because he believed she loved Brian Hillier; and made sure that she should not lose him. By his own sacrifice he had thought to preserve her happiness.

Her endurance snapped. She made a strange, low sound, and caught at the rail for support.

For an hour the line had been riding fast towards the west. Linton, bound and mounted behind a sinewy tribesman, wondered whether they were making for some encampment amid this eternal dust. That their revenge would take some form of torture he had no doubt. Perhaps they wanted their womenfolk to witness the scene, to take part in it. Arab women, he knew, were often more vindictive than their men.

In the crushing silence of the *maidan*, broken only by the soft pad of hoofs, his thoughts were like a loud voice. At last he had done something for Coral, paid tribute out of his hoarded love, and its worth to her was full measure. He had saved her happiness from destruction. The Fates had been generous to give him the chance. They had granted his prayer that he might serve her. He could not expect such a boon for nothing. The price of it——

His jaw set firmly. It was no use trying to pretend. He was afraid. No man could leave the world without a little panic, and his own way of leaving it would be made dreadful by the Wahhaki. But up to the end he could fortify himself with the knowledge that he had served Coral to his utmost.

In his pondering, he had not noticed three tribesmen detach themselves and ride back towards the river. The sight might have helped him to understand what followed. When they reached the encampment he was lifted down and put into a black goat-skin tent. They brought him food, and he did not know whether to grasp at a new hope, or to believe that this was one of their subtle cruelties in prolonging suspense. So he thrust aside both hope and despair, and thought of Coral.

Later, he heard the drone of aeroplanes, and his pulses leapt and hammered. But the sounds passed away and nothing happened.

"I must have imagined it," he told himself, and this broken promise of rescue left him bowed down.

Time passed and nobody came to drag him out for the drama of revenge. Day merged into night, and he slept for awhile, worn out by suspense. The morning dawned, the sun rose higher upon its burning climb, striking fiercely through the dark tent. Again hope returned, and this time it was justified. About midday the Sheikh of the Wahhaki arrived and told him he was free.

At first he could scarcely believe the truth. Not until he was mounted on an Arab pony, riding towards the Tigris with an escort of half a dozen, could he allow himself to release the flood-gates of relief.

Back at the encampment, the Sheikh and his chief men were moved to guttural laughter. It was a rare indulgence for them, permitted by the triumph of having made money without undue risk. For years after their greatest entertainment was to relate the story of how they had been resting in a nullah when bullets struck near by. Riding out, they had encountered a party of whites. Their chief, more cunning than the hawk, pretended that one of those bullets had killed his brother, and demanded a white man in exchange. A hostage was certain security. Then he had sent back tribesmen to offer their prisoner in exchange for ransom, and they had made known their offer just as those devilish machines of the air were being prepared to pursue. So the ransom was paid, and the white men sent their machines over the encampment as a warning, no more, not daring to drop destruction lest the tribe killed its prisoner at once. And no punishment had come to the tribe, since the white men agreed that the killing of the Sheikh's brother had given fair cause for seizing a hostage.

It was a popular story among the Wahhaki and never failed to raise guttural laughter.

But to nobody else was the Sheikh's cunning known, and therefore Linton, grateful to be alive as he rode away with his escort, felt a little sympathy for him. Freedom meant a future of river trips on the *Saluki*, up and down, up and down, almost deadly in their monotony—but not quite. For he would have a memory to preserve. Whenever regrets dragged at him, he could say to himself that Coral was somewhere in the world, radiantly happy with Hillier.

"And I was able to give her that happiness." The sentence remained with him, a wistful echo, while he rode towards the Tigris and Baghdad. It remained with him while they gave him quite an heroic reception at the Resident's house in the city. But it became more poignant when he found himself alone with Coral, on the balcony overlooking the river. He didn't exactly know how they had become separated from the others, and he wished it had not happened. It was so hard to stand before her, worshipping, and not begrudge Hillier his luck.

"They ought not to have made all this fuss," he said awkwardly. The effort of keeping adoration in check gave his voice a queer note. "I haven't done anything."

Coral stared into his eyes. "You changed the dice."

At that he started. "Changed the dice!" It seemed impossible that they could have discovered his secret. "What do you mean? How——"

"The steward told us about them, so it's not a bit of good denying it." She paused, and her paleness and her jerky breathing puzzled him vaguely. "Why did you do it?"

Linton could not answer. She was looking at him in a way that made him mistrust his senses.

"Why did you do it?"

"Because—because I knew it would break your heart if Hillier were taken."

"And why did you put my affairs before your own life?" The violet eyes were searching him to the soul.

"Because——" Then, incredulous, he

grasped the meaning of her radiance. Not daring to believe, he took a step forward and she raised her arms to him.

"Oh, my dear!"

Like a man who has witnessed a miracle, marvelling at the glory of it, he watched those eyes. "But surely Hillier——"

"No." She turned her head away. "You haven't answered my question. Won't you tell me?" Her voice dropped to a whisper. "I am longing to hear."

With a glad cry he drew her to him, and his answer needed no words.

DO I REMEMBER?

DO I remember (or do I dream?)
The day that I was born,—
The little greening thorn
About the gate;
The linnet, lilting late;
The lark that laughed to scorn
The greyness of the morn,
And spilled his song, a silver stream,
From Heaven's Gate:
Do I remember—or do I dream?

Do I remember (or do I dream?)
The gold upon the hill;
The little rippling rill
That tossed untamed
Where the whinblooms flamed,
And the wild winds wandered at their will;
The lakelet, lone and still,
That, as a gem, in the grey dawn's gleam
Lay mist-enframed:
Do I remember—or do I dream?

Do I remember (or do I dream?)
A little golden head,—
Twin lips of rowan-red,
And eyes of blue:
The love my childhood knew
Ere yet my youth was sped,
And all Hope's roses—dead—
Lay scattered on Life's troubled stream,
Or turned to rue:
Do I remember—or do I dream?

LIAM P. CLANCY.



OBVIOUS.

YOKEL: 'Ad an accident?
CAPSIZED AIRMAN (aching all over): No—just come down to lay an egg!

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

LOU-LOU AND THE LEVIATHAN

By Edward F. Spence

WHEN I found myself in Lou-Lou's boudoir I was much intrigued by a dead vermilion, Chinese embroidery hanging over the low bookcase. The boudoir is typical of its owner: very dainty, full of pretty things, and no rubbish. She is like Balzac's Parisian heroines, strong, energetic in body and mind, with an air of sweet simplicity and fragility.

After talking about nothing in particular, like old friends who haven't met for nearly six months, she suddenly broke out, "What do you think—I've wiped William's eye as an angler." "William" is William Clarstory, a distinguished K.C. I laughed incredulously.

"Oh," she continued, "I don't mean fishing like you and Edward; going on the sea—if it's smooth—and using cart-ropes and meat-hooks with wriggly worms, and catching tiddlers, and taking them home, and getting them cooked—and then eating something else."

"My dear Lou-Lou . . ."

"My sweet Grace, who is telling this story?"

"What story?"

"Why, my story."

"Oh," I said, "an angler's story," and shrugged my shoulders.

"Cynicism doesn't suit your good woman style, my dear Grace," she remarked. "Well, you know our holiday plans were upset because that house got scarlet fever. But—anyhow, we found ourselves in Devonshire last autumn, planted for a fortnight at a little inn, and nothing to do but drive or golf at a distance. There was a great big lake of fresh water by the sea-shore."

"Like the one near Cayeux, the Hable D'Ault."

"Yes. All the hotel people went fishing it but William who turns up his nose at coarse fishing. However, he got interested because every day it turned out that one man caught more pike than all the others, so William said there must be something in it and talked tackle with him, and one day went out in his boat. Then William fell."

"Out of the boat?"

"Of course not—he fell from his high estate of dry-fly purist, and began trying to spin, and

making a jolly mess of it at first. It's not half as easy as it looks if you do it from the reel—oh, you wouldn't understand that."

"Go on," I said, "never mind my feelings."

"He didn't catch much or anything big for two or three days, and then the other man—a Middle Temple man—went away and left his boat and boatman and all his rods and tackle at our disposal. Rather a dear old thing, though his name was Edward, like your husband."

"I believe, my dear, that in the good old days they used to duck shrews in a bucket."

"I thought," she replied, "that they ducked them in a pond, not a bucket. Well, one day I went out in his boat. He caught several pike, all smallish, and they put them back alive and kicking, and it didn't seem much fun to me; but he liked it—and wouldn't say so. He hooked one just before we were going in to dinner and said, 'Here, you land it, Lou-Lou,' and put the rod into my hands. I knew how to hold a rod, for I used to fish at Great Marlow with father for roach."

"And husbands too," I interposed.

"Oh, I hooked William in London. D'you know, Grace, there are fierce instincts in the most civilised of us. It was rather a big one and strong—a ten-pounder. The moment I felt it pulling hard, savagely, my blood was up and I'd have stuck to it till midnight if necessary. And—oh—I was quite vexed when after weighing it and taking out the hooks they put it back into the water—I wanted them to kill it."

Queer to look at this exquisite product of civilisation, beautifully gowned, carefully manicured and waved, highly cultured—superficially—as dainty as bisquit Sèvres, and see a fierce look in her blue eyes.

"Next day William had to go to Exeter and wanted me to come. 'No,' I said. 'I'm going to spin for pike.'

"He laughed and said that if I caught one he'd eat it, bones and all. Well, I got Fred, the boatman, to give me lessons in the morning. Quite a merry, pleasant man, and so keen. Oh, what a mess I made of it, and got my knuckles rapped and spent hours getting out tangles; but I stuck to it, and I went on practising after lunch and up to tea-time. He fixed up a stout tackle on a short rather heavy rod and baited it with a small dead perch and rowed me out. Most of the people were 'bunging'—fishing with a float, quite a duffer's game—like your sea-fishing."

"Thank you, darling—Edward, I may observe, casts a fly quite as well as William."

"I didn't do it too badly for a beginner, but oh, the weed I caught, and each time thought I had a fish, and the tangles! After an hour or so I was hot, tired, and disheartened. One last cast and I heaved it out too fiercely, so there was an awful tangle. We sat down ever so long getting it out. 'Funny, Miss,' he said, 'if a big un took it off the bottom. I've known it happen several times.'"

"Miss?" said I.

"Oh, he always called me 'Miss'—I rather think he thought—oh, that doesn't matter. He said this just as we'd got the line clear and most of it back on the reel, and then the loose line began to run out. He gave a funny shout and told me to take the rod and strike."

"And did you strike?"



YOU NEVER KNOW.

SHORT-SIGHTED SHOPWALKER: Are you being attended to, sir—or—or—madam?

"Did I strike! Immediately I did came a rush that nearly tore the rod out of my hands and the reel screamed.

"'Hold the rod-point up, and give ee line,' shouted Fred, and I managed to get hold of the reel handle, and then down went the rod, though I tried to hold it up. It was up and down and Fred shouting and the fish rushing and the reel screaming for ever so long, and suddenly the pike jumped. 'A whacker,' he shouted; 'biggest said—saucy fellow—'ee's gettin' done—look at ee on top.' It put new life into me to see it, looking immense, but swimming languidly. I reeled in hard. Fred took out a big net—put it down to the water, lifted it with a grunt. A convulsive kick and the pike knocked the net out of his hands and fell against me, nearly knocking me down—oh, my pretty skirt! —and Fred flung himself on the struggling monster—oh, what a mix-up!—he holding it wrapped up in the skirt and shouting to me for the priest."



THE TRY-ON.

COMEDIAN (after trying on successively smaller hats): This is still a lot too big.

SALESMAN: Can't understand it, sir. That's four sizes too small for you.

COMEDIAN: Yes, but I haven't made you laugh yet!

I ever see; hold un tight, ee's going for the big reeds.' I was fearfully excited; my hat came off and fell into the water, a jolly new velour, and I saw it fill and sink without an effort to get it. My hair came down, and I broke a nail, and tore my blouse, and sometimes the man swore at me for letting the rod-point down. It seemed to last for hours and my arms ached horribly. 'I can't stick it much longer,' said I, nearly crying.

"'Only a few minutes more, my dear,' he

"The priest?"

"About twenty inches of an oar handle. I managed to find it and he whacked and whacked the brute on the head till it was still. Then we straightened out things a bit and he got out the hooks, and weighed the fish.

"'Twenty-nine pound!' he exclaimed.

"'Thirty,' said I—'a shilling a pound, besides what my husband gives you. And not a word about it taking the bait on the bottom.'

"'Thirty it is, Miss, and fair angling it was.'"

"We rowed to the shore and there was William waiting. 'Caught anything?' he asked sarcastically.

"'A nice little un,' said Fred.

"'You're going to eat it, bones and all!'

"'Yes,' replied William, laughing, 'fried for breakfast,' and then Fred lifted up the fish. 'Female. Thirty-one pounds, sir, finest fish caught here in my time—caught fair spinning by the lady and handled like a hartis.'

"To be fair, William did look pleased. Then he said he'd sooner have it stuffed and mounted than eat it. And there it is."

As she spoke, Lou-Lou rose and, with a dramatic gesture, pulled back the Chinese embroidery, and lo! a huge pike with gaping jaws and horrid teeth in a glass case.

"And the velour hat?" I asked.

"Oh, William wrote for another and for a jolly split-cane rod, and we stuck to the lake for a week but got nothing over a sixteen-pounder that he caught."

"And how did Mr. Fred know it was a female fish?"

"Size of the big head, my dear—it's not only among civilised animals that the female does most of the talking."



THAT NEW SPRING TIE.

SHOPMAN (to customer, who has expressed a preference for reds and blues): The green predominates in this tie certainly, sir; but the red and the blue predominate even more, if possible.

THE ART OF GARGLING.

By W. E. Richards.

WHILE an influenza epidemic rages we leave nothing to chance. Patricia pins her faith on cinnamon, while I prefer the good old-fashioned remedy of rum and black beer. Every day the house is sprayed with antiseptic fluid until it smells like a hospital, and whenever we come in from the polluted air of the streets we gargle.

Patricia puts great trust in gargling. I must say she gurgles, I mean gargles, delightfully, running up and down the scale like a piccolo player. For my part, I have no particular talent in gargling. There is no technique, no virtuosity, no science about my efforts. Mine is just plain gargling.

I cannot gargle before witnesses. It is, in my opinion, essentially a private business. But given the privacy of the bathroom, some of my efforts have not been so bad. As I point out to Patricia, although I cannot do it with cadenzas and double stopping, I have at least escaped the 'flu.

I have tried hard to master the art of gargling, for there is no satisfaction in a drink of peroxide of hydrogen, and salt and water is very little better. But as accidents will happen, even to the best of garglers, I have invented a gargle of my own, the formula of which is a profound secret. Whenever I suspect the presence of influenza germs, I take the bottle from its hiding-place behind my shaving tackle, add soda to taste, and gargle. With this mixture I have obtained very satisfactory results, and in future shall use no other.

"Have you gargled?" demanded Patricia when I came in rather late the other night.

"Not at all," I answered politely.

"Then you'll do it at once. If you must go to these crowded meetings——"

"My dear," I protested. "Just a little community singing."

"The very way to spread disease."

"Do you know what we sang?" I asked.

"'The more we are together,' I suppose," she suggested coldly.

"Yes. There's quite a lot of gargling—I mean giggling—in that. But——"

"Don't tell me now. Afterwards, when you've gargled."

I crept obediently to the bathroom, poured out a good stiff gargle, tossed my head back, but my technique was rusty and the fluid slid down my throat. I tried again, but didn't really gargle, although I thought my temperature was better. I stumped back to the drawing-room.

"Not a germ on me," I reported.

"Have you gargled?" asked Patricia suspiciously. "I didn't hear you."

"The best garglers are quite silent this year."

"I don't believe you have."

"If you want noise," I explained, "it can be done. But the noise is incidental and unnecessary. In fact, one ought to be able to change gear without it. Some men can imitate the filling of a bathroom cylinder, others a blackbird in spring, and one man I know can imitate Galli-Curci perfectly. In fact, the B.B.C. wanted him to broadcast. Personally, I like mine without frills—a good, plain, silent gargle, taken three times a day after meals."

"Let me see you gargle," she insisted.

"Here?" I exclaimed.

"Why not?"

"Sometimes," I explained, "one is a little off the wicket. But if you will bring me a towel, a tumbler, a bowl——"

"Are you having a bath, or doing a conjuring trick?"

"A little of both, probably," I answered wearily. "One cannot gargle without tools."

"Be careful with the peroxide," she warned me when my wants were supplied. I promised I would.



THE SHARE-OUT.

"Give us a bite of yer apple?"
"Wait till I get to the worm."

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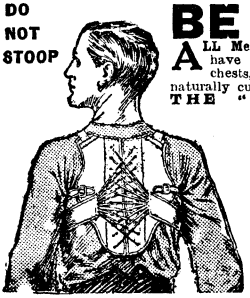
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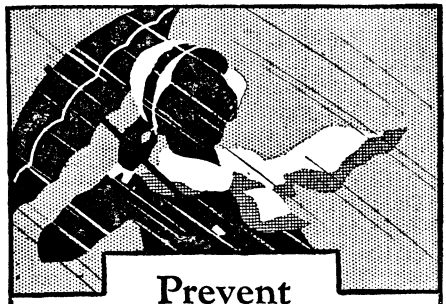
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"Well," she asked, "when are you going to begin?"

I used the bowl.

"Please ask no questions when my mouth's full. I've swallowed half the stuff. And I can't do it if you stand there."

"Where may I stand, please?"

"There is no need to stand gaping at all. Please sit down and read the paper."

"I'm not in the way here?"

"Right in the firing-line. Would you mind trying the Upper Circle? Half a crown, including tax. Patrons are requested not to applaud in the middle of the act."

"Do you always stand like that to gargle?"

"Like what?" I demanded, recovering my breath.

"With both legs outstretched."

"That's the two-eyed stance. It gives me purchase so that I can throw my head back."

"But it isn't necessary——"

"Quite. Not for your sort of gargling. But this is strong he-man gargling."

"I noticed at once it wasn't the ordinary kind."

"If the children at the back of the hall won't keep quiet," I said severely, "they will be sent home before the buns and oranges are distributed."

In the silence which followed, I lifted my tumbler.

"One—two—three. Go!" she said sharply.

Mercifully she thumped my back just as I was turning blue.

"Swallowed any?" she asked.

"All," I gasped between my coughs.

"No. There's quite a lot on the floor," she remarked brightly. "Never mind. I've found a dry little island. Go on."

"I am not going on," I declared resolutely. "I prefer to catch the 'flu."

And I took to my bed at once.

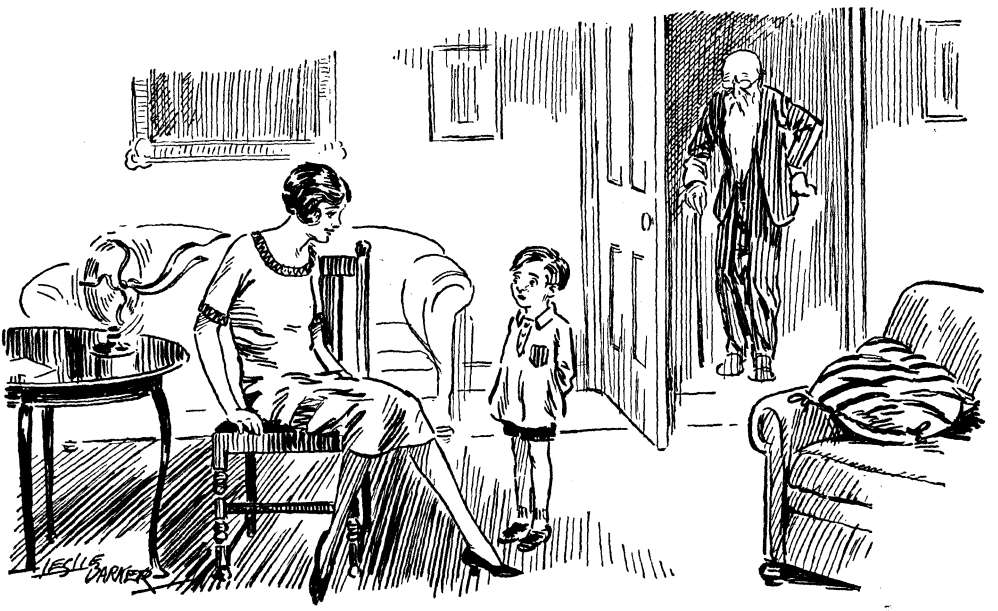
THE young married woman was sitting at her writing-desk. There was a pen in her hand, paper on the table before her, and on her brow there was a worried frown.

"Let me see," she murmured, scribbling rapidly. "I want the sitting-room papered and I must have new electric light shades for that room. The dining-room is very shabby too. I must have that papered and another carpet put down on the floor. The bathroom needs new tiling, and I'd like a new kitchen range and a built-in refrigerator."

"To whom are you writing, dear?" asked her adoring husband, looking up from his newspaper.

"To our landlord," replied she.

"I thought perhaps you were writing to your fairy godmother," he observed.



ELECTRICITY IN THE HOME.

LITTLE BOY: Mummy, do let grandpa sit on that chair. I want to watch the electric fan blow his whiskers.

"POE sold his Raven poem for two guineas."

"Lucky. I only got ten shillings for an Ode to the Elephant."

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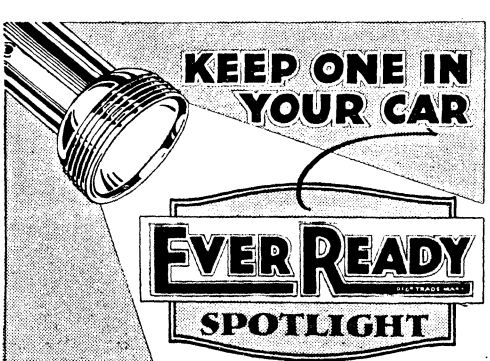
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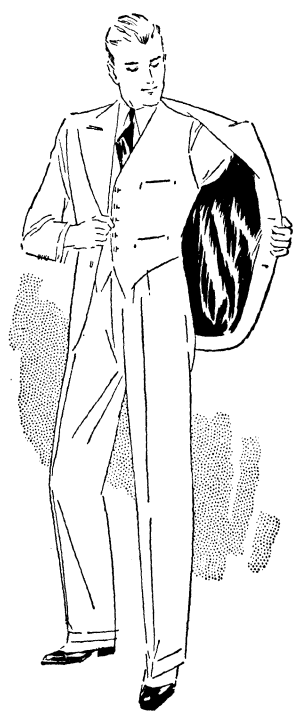
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"Waving the magic umbrella, the look of rapture upon her face was enough to haunt your dreams. Dinkie it was, her very own Dinkie, who had done the trick."—*See page* 547.

THE MASCOT

THE STORY OF A CUP FINAL

J. C. Snaith

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

SOME people have charm, but Mr. W. H. Jukes, commonly known as Ginger, had never been accused of anything of that kind. Beauty of countenance may be the endowment of others, but anyone tracing a likeness between Good Old Ginge and Rudolf Valentino would have been wise to consult an oculist.

A time there was when the name of Ginger Jukes was a household word in Blackhampton. In the great days, only a few short years ago, when the Rovers were expected to win the English Cup, the redoubtable Ginger was a power. He didn't pretend to be an oil painting, his features were rugged, his mouth was like an unlaced boot, his top was the colour of a chrysanthemum, but those bow legs were a snag for the trickiest forward, he could kick with either foot, his hefty shoulders never shirked a tackle. On the field he sought no quarter nor gave any. Not a classic mover, his eminence as a right full back was a triumph of character. There was nothing in the least pretty-pretty or la-di-da about Good Old Ginge, but no more dependable player had ever worn the crimson and old gold. And that was putting it high, for the Blackhampton Rovers went back to the dawn of Association football.

For more than half a century it had been the ambition of this historic club to bring the English Cup to the busy Midland city. Early in the eighties it reached the semi-final, but not until thirty years later did it get so far again. Judges of form in the town where the saucepans come from were confident that on this occasion the old club was really going to click. And then the tragedy happened which has caused this story to be written.

The second appearance of the Rovers in a semi-final was at Manchester. They had to meet the Villa, ancient rivals and hearty foemen, and never more so than in a cup-tie. In the midst of a great fight, with the Rovers more than holding their own, said every Blackhamptonian, although some folks would never admit it—well, anyhow, the Rovers were one up and only thirty-five minutes to play, and the Villans pressing like tigers, when Ginge, all out for the ball, slipped a cartilage and had to be carried off the field. It was the end of Blackhampton hopes for that year. With the linch-pin out of the defence the foe scored twice. Villa would have won in any case, said Birmingham, yet the entire population of a neighbouring city laughed at the idea. Still, the Rovers lost, and poor old Ginge, although operated upon twice by one of the first surgeons of the day, never kicked a ball again.

This tragic accident cost the Rovers the English Cup, also it cost Ginger Jukes an International Cap; so they ever maintained in Blackhampton. However, in that city they are not unmindful of services rendered. Ginger with his permanent limp was at the end of a fine career; he was a pathetic figure to those who did not forget what so lately he had been. Perhaps as much out of sympathy as anything he was appointed trainer to the Club.

It was a sad come-down for Ginger. A mere trainer never gets a share of the limelight. All the kicks and none of the ha'pence are his. If things are going well it is because the team is a good one; if things are not going so well the team is still a good one but evidently it is out of condition, and needs a new trainer.

Ginger, however, was a philosopher. Nothing could make up for the loss of an active career; but half a loaf is better than nothing. He put his great strong heart into his job; had it been his lot to sweep a crossing he would still have put his heart into his job. He was absolutely dependable. Thorough in all things, was the motto of

Ginger Jukes. He never spared himself or his charges that they should do justice to the Old Club, who he considered had treated him well. Even if the hand of fate had fallen heavily upon his broad shoulders he remained a great trier ; moreover a creature of ambition.

Ambition led Ginger to cast his eye in a particular direction. He didn't look his best in plus-fours, but when he felt the spur no obstacle ever barred his path.

Ginger's ambition took the form of a lady. At the Club headquarters, the Crown and Cushion, where during the long winter evenings the pundits met to play a game of billiards and to discuss the chances of the Rovers for the ensuing Saturday, was Miss Milly Chadwick. She was well informed in all that related to the Rovers ; her opinions were sound. She was a charming girl and a general favourite. Indeed, she dispensed a tankard of mild or a finger of Scotch with such amenity that she had come to be regarded as the Club mascot. No home match was complete unless her adorable smile lit the grand stand ; nay, influential supporters had such faith in its magic that Miss Chadwick was sometimes induced, especially if the issue was in doubt and the old club was in more need than usual of her picturesque presence, to go forth to a foreign field.

More than once she had visited the Metropolis, as the Spurs, Chelsea and the Arsenal knew to their cost.

It had become a recognised fact that Miss Chadwick's appearance on any football ground in England made it extremely difficult for the Rovers to lose. She had an occult influence upon their play. And you had only to see her daintily dispensing the firewater of the palefaces or a modest ginger ale with a slice of lemon to realise why this was so. Not only was she a real peach, with those long lashes nestling upon the carmine of her cheeks, but she had a way with her. It was arch and yet it was dignified ; her clear blue eyes were full of humour, and she invariably behaved as the little lady she undoubtedly was.

For all that she was so friendly no supporter ever dreamt of taking a liberty with Miss Milly Chadwick. Had he done so he would promptly have found himself in the Blackhampton and Duckingfield Canal. She was respected, not only on the score of her sex, and in the city of Blackhampton the sex *is* respected, but for the reason that, beyond doubt, she was the Club Mascot.

This fact, however, did not deter Ginger from casting an eye in this perilous quarter.

Ginger argued thus. She's far above the form, of course, of an ugly blighter like me. With so many pretty boys around I've no chance at all. Still, you never know your luck. Nothing venture nothing win, as Shakespeare says. And I've saved a bit, and she's saved a bit—Ginger had a mind very practical as well as rather inquiring —and with old Heasman at the corner shop on his last legs, I fancy that newspaper and tobacco business will soon be going cheap ; and with Milly behind the counter helping the regular customers to win the £20,000 prize with tips straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak, why, everything in the garden might be lovely.

Yes, Ginger was ambitious ; yet none could deny that he was a genuine trier. But the siege of Miss Milly Chadwick was uphill work.

Dinkie Dawson, for instance, had such a pull. He didn't limp, his top didn't flame like a chrysanthemum, his legs didn't sag in the middle, he wasn't a back number. On the contrary he was a real live wire. All who knew what Soccer was knew that Dink was the finest inside forward in the game. Every inch of him was " class " ; every movement of his slim elegance had a rhythm of its own ; every touch he gave the ball with those winged feet—they seemed not to kick but to caress it—had the inspiration of a true artist.

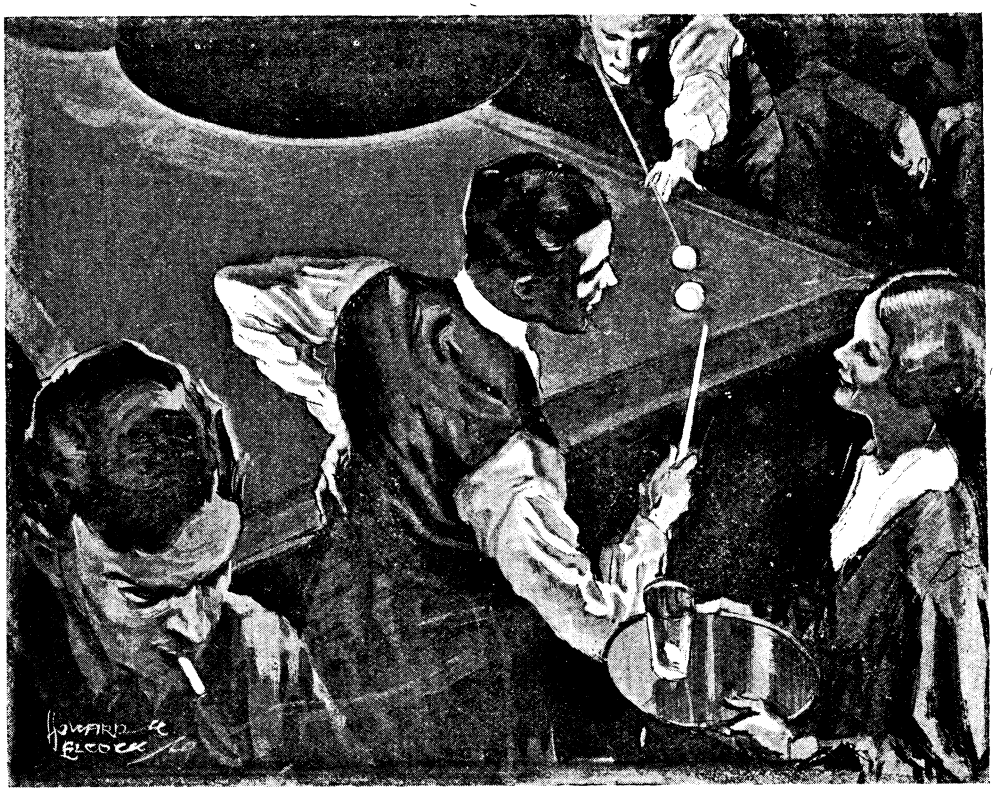
Dinkie was the idol of the whole city. If you walked with him along the London Road every other girl he passed unconsciously gave him the glad eye. Do not blame them. If you can imagine a combination of Douglas Fairbanks and Owen Nares, with a soupçon of Ivor Novello and a dash of Tom Mix, (it may not be possible to do so, but there's no harm in trying,) you can begin to assess the impact of Dinkie Dawson upon the fair inhabitants of Blackhampton.

The worst of it was, Dinkie was also a man of ambition. Whether he had old Heasman's tobacco and newspaper business in his eye, I cannot say, but there was no escaping the cold fact that on six successive Tuesdays—her night out—the Mascot had accompanied Beau Ideal to the pictures. Ginger had a forward-looking mind, but it was in vain that it looked forward. Once he had tried to spike Mr. Dink by booking Miss Chadwick three Tuesdays ahead. But when the day came she coolly said that she

had quite forgotten in making the engagement that she had promised Dinkie to go with him to the pictures every Tuesday throughout the winter.

A rebuff if ever there was one. But poor Ginger just had to swallow it. He was a mere trainer who got all the kicks and none of the ha'pence; he walked with a permanent limp and in his prime was not a thing of beauty. Whereas Dinkie—— You may have seen the Hermes of Praxiteles. Ginger hadn't. But he had read about the thing went wrong with Mr. Blooming Adonis, well, the arrival in Blackhampton of the English Cup would be indefinitely postponed.

Ginger was very human, he was terribly in love, but he did not give a serious thought to this alternative. He was a man and a sportsman; and even if Dink was getting above himself, and had shed an old friend to whom in the beginning he owed a great deal, every morning on bended knee Ginge continued faithfully to massage the superb limbs of his rival.



"Small wonder that the Mascot, handing the hero a ginger ale with a slice of lemon at the Crown and Cushion, had her soul in her eyes."

bloke. And when Dinkie was in the buff and his perfect muscles were displayed, and the trainer was on his knees giving those supple tendons a little bit extra in the way of massage, it is easy to imagine what dark thoughts must sometimes have sullied the soul of Ginger Jukes.

The Club had no more faithful servant, but after all Ginge was only human. Curse the blighter, if only one of those delicate things would snap, as they so easily might, a little pressure in the wrong place from a pair of immensely powerful hands—well, if anything went wrong with Mr. Blooming Adonis, well, the arrival in Blackhampton of the English Cup would be indefinitely postponed.

The Club trainer had his reward. Alas, that reward cruelly put Ambition into the discard. From strength to strength went Dinkie, from strength to strength went the crimson and old gold. Talk about being the idol of the city! Why when Dinkie kicked those three goals against the Spurs with that wizard's left foot he was publicly kissed by the Lady Mayoress. Small wonder that the Mascot, handing the hero a ginger ale with a slice of lemon in the middle of a hundred up at the Crown and Cushion, had her soul in her eyes. Small wonder that the next

evening when they went to the pictures together she was the proudest girl in Blackhampton.

Poor old Ginge as he sneaked in behind them; he was like a moth that cannot resist the candle although knowing its wings will be horribly burnt; still he simply could not keep away from the pictures. Yet he knew that two rows ahead, in a snappy blue suit, his oiled hair brushed back within an inch of its life, and fancying himself to beat the band . . . !

Well, as I say, poor dear Ginge was only human.

"If that perishin' Cup comes to Blackhampton it's all up with me"—Ginge woke with this thought in the middle of a cold April night, three days before the departure of the team for the Final at Wembley—"She'll marry Dink for sure." It was like the thrust of a knife. "And I'm as good a man as he is, if life had only played square. If only I could be coverin' the goal and makin' full use of my weight in the old style . . ." Ginger groaned at that vain dream. With a sudden gust of uncontrollable fury he shot out his right leg and gave an imaginary ball a hell of a kick. Then he groaned properly; that maimed right leg didn't half return the compliment. Red-hot pokers, a long procession of red-hot pokers slowly mounted in review order to his spine. Ginger gnashed his teeth with agony.

If ever a man could be said to live in a house divided against itself that man was Ginger. The Rovers just had to bring that Cup to Blackhampton, yet their trainer, their friend, philosopher and guide, could not bear the sight of the man who beyond all the rest of the team must do the deed. Much depended upon Dinkie. He was a whole class above any other forward on either side. The Heathens' defence, composed of doughty warriors, would do all they knew to "mark" the finest inside left in the kingdom, but if Dink was all right they'd never be able to stop him. In the considered opinion of Ginger Jukes, and there was none higher, barring accident to the hated Dink—alas that I should use such a word!—the Cup was as good as won. But if you can, conceive the situation. There on his knees, toiling and moiling, a mere slave among those who a few brief years ago had been eager and proud to claim equality, was Ginge the unlucky. No longer a hero with the spot-light full on him, on the shelf years before his time, cheeked by young upstarts, patronised by mental and moral inferiors. He was only Ginger the trainer. No kudos for a mere trainer. Smart girls had no use for a towel and bottle man when a cove like Dink was by.

And fancying himself not half, neither! In Ginger's opinion it was a mistake to have made him captain of the team; had he dared he would have said so to the Boss.

However, it was none of Ginger's business; yet, in a sense, it was. The trainer had only to run foul of the best player in the team to lose his job. A trying situation for a sensitive man on the very eve of the Final. Dink wasn't half throwing his weight about; in fact he ventured to tell off an old friend for some fancied neglect of duty, before all the boys. It called for every ounce of sand that Ginger possessed to keep from giving the blighter a punch on the nose.

AT last, the great day. Ginger felt in his bones the Cup was coming to Blackhampton this time. But somehow the prospect gave him little pleasure. Still, he had done his duty—more than his duty by the boys. How he had slaved to keep them up to concert pitch; in especial he had treated Dinkie's famous left leg as a work of art. What care he had lavished upon it; and yet—and yet—how easy—how fatally easy to overdo the treatment!

"Well, Ginge, they look pretty bobbish, what?" Thus Mr. Augustus Higginbotham, the Chairman of the Club, as the team drove to the ground in its own private bus after a very light and informal luncheon.

Ginger responded with a dour nod. He was no courtier at any time; and it was all the praise he was likely to receive, even when the inevitable happened. Barring accidents they'd win on their heads.

The Mascot had travelled to town in a special train along with other leading supporters. A seat had been reserved for her in Block C of the grand stand, at the end of the front row of the red-carpeted central gangway, quite near to His Majesty.

Yes, literally. The King was coming to Wembley and he would present the English Cup to the captain of the winning team.

Every time Ginge remembered that he gave an inward groan. But for his accident he would have seen to it, with his cool brain and his forward-looking mind, that W. H. Jukes had been captain of the winning team. Dink with all his genius had no real bottom to his character. The better man,

like many a better man before him, simply had to grin and bear the malice of the stars.

From the word go, it was a dog-fight; one of the real old-fashioned Cup Finals. The Heathens were stout warriors, with a lot of Cup Tie experience. They didn't try fancy-work, it was not in their line, but they knew what they could do, and they did it. Every inch of the ground was contested. Dinkie was so closely shadowed by a highly competent defence that when half-time sounded no goal had been scored by either side.

As Ginge was giving Dink a rub down in the dressing-room with his own hands—he was determined to do his duty by the star performer to the bitter end—Mr. Augustus Higginbotham, chewing a very big cigar, came up and spoke in his ear.

"Well, Ginge, what do you think?"

For such a powerful optimist he sounded a trifle anxious. The cold truth was, the Heathens were playing above their form, as they had rather a habit of doing in a Cup Tie.

"Oh, we've got 'em all right, Guv'nor." The lordly Dink took upon himself to answer the Chairman's question when a man more modest would have left it to the older and wiser man to whom it was addressed.

"If that is so, young fella, it's because I've sweated blood to bring the whole lot of you up to the very last ounce," was what that older and wiser man would like to have said, but he didn't. Quietly he went on with his ungrateful task of giving personal attention to the Captain of the Team. Such over-confidence was asking for it. Mr. Flash didn't even touch wood when he spread himself.

"Shouldn't wonder if that Cocky Fool hasn't queered it," mused Ginger as the Heathens opened the second half by fairly taking charge of the game.

The pace was cruel. One side or the other was bound to crack before the end. It was unthinkable that the side would be the Rovers. At the same time a man wiser than Dink would not have opened his face. Gee, it began to look as if Doc Evans, that long-legged son-of-a-Welsh-international, had taken Dink's measure.

Well, well, if Doc had, it might cut two ways. For there in the corner seat of the red-carpeted gangway, just in front of Ginger, who by virtue of his office was allowed to sit on the red-carpeted stairs, was the Mascot. She was clutching frantically a crimson-and-old-gold umbrella which a true believer in her powers had given her for the occasion. Her wonderful eyes were starry with excitement.

If Mr. Flash didn't bring home the Cup after all . . . !

But now, in these great moments, something rose in the heart of Ginger that trampled on his lower nature. Simply trampled on it. Whatever else Ginge was, first and foremost he was a sportsman.

Suddenly he gave a gasp. Dink had side-slipped Doc Evans, yes, left him standing, with a false pass and a double feint. But there was still Crasher Brown, the best right back in the South; yes, there was Crasher, timing things to a T as usual.

Yes, Crasher me lad, but not quite as usual. Dink has the little bit extra. When he is fairly going there is the devil and all in those magic feet.

Yes—Crasher—he's missed him! Crasher's made his panther spring and Crasher's missed him . . .

No need to enter upon details. But Mr. Augustus Higginbotham, for all that he was seated next but three to His Majesty, simply went berserk. Ginger sprang up like a rocket from the top step of the centre gangway. Grandees were three-a-penny around him, but he, too, made a public exhibition of himself.

The Cup was as good as won. Only a quarter of an hour to go and Dink's wonderful goal had put the Rovers one up. In the midst of his transport, as he was shouting and dancing and waving his sponge and towel like a madman, Ginge observed a picturesque form a mere arm's length ahead. It, too, was behaving not at all like Buckingham Palace. The Mascot was frantically waving the gold-and-crimson umbrella.

Those radiant eyes suddenly caught the wild eyes of Ginge. Beneath a coquettish beret, which precisely matched the parti-coloured weapon she wielded with such effect, was the light of humour. But, also, there was the light of ecstasy. The look of rapture upon her face was enough to haunt your dreams. Dinkie it was, her very own Dinkie, who had done the trick. On Monday morning every newspaper in England that was a newspaper would have his portrait. Ginger knew only too well that he was meeting the gaze of the proudest and happiest girl in the world. But at such a moment he was quite incapable of stabbing himself with such a thought.

Dink had earned her, by Heaven he had!

The Heathens were beat. They were altering their formation, they were moving

up Crasher into the front line, they were trying six forwards. But it was all no use. The Heathens were beat.

And if they didn't watch it—yes—no—by Heaven—yes—no—by Heaven—Dink had side-slipped Doc again, simply left him standing. And yes—no—yes—by Heaven, there was no Crasher this time . . .

Talk about pandemonium! In Blackhampton they produce marvellous lungs, and the most vocal half of that city seemed to be there. He really was a wonder, Dink. A downright superman. No other chap in England could have scored those two goals.

All over bar the shouting. And now, ladies and gentlemen, be good enough to control yourselves, and resume your seats and take a pull on yourselves generally, for His Majesty the King of England is about to present the National Trophy to the captain of the winning team. And if ever the captain of the winning team deserved to receive the National Trophy from the hands of the King of England, that man was Mr. James Dawson, otherwise known as Dinkie.

Here the lad is. Every inch a winner. Cool, calm and confident, hardly turned a hair.





"Not half a glance did the great man give to that delightful creature as he back-heeled her umbrella out of his path with his clever left foot."

But you can be a little too calm, a little too confident, felt poor Ginger in the dark recesses of his soul, as Dinkie kneed and elbowed a little roughly out of the way a mere individual with a chrysanthemum top who had been accommodated with an improvised seat on a step of the central gangway. Perhaps he ought to have moved aside more briskly to make way for his Royal High-and-Mightiness. Still—curse him!

No, at such a moment, such a sportsman as Ginger didn't really mean that. And yet—and yet! But why stop to consider the point?

However, when it came to brushing aside the old-gold-and-crimson umbrella of an authentic Mascot that was quite another matter. Dinkie had a right to be proud, but if holding your head so high you do not deign to give a glance to that emblem of good luck to which you owe so much, when it is borne by the neatest and sweetest of her sex and she is smiling divinely, quite divinely upon you, well . . . well . . . as I say, why stop to consider the point? If you do it only means that you will keep the King waiting.

Ginger, breathing hard and craning his short neck round a velvet angle of the old-gold-and-crimson beret, was forced to allow that had His Majesty handed the cup to Mr. W. H. Jukes, as, had fate been less unkind, His Majesty certainly would have done, the bow given in return might not have been so elegant as Dinkie's. Hard not to feel proud of the lad. Curse him, when he really got into the limelight, Doug and Adolph and that push had very little on him. Bowed like a film star, he did, as George Rex handed him the Cup.

YOU might suppose this was the end of the story. It should be, I agree, for it would be a heroic end. But it happens that it wasn't.

Holding the Cup in both hands, with all the pride of a young mother in a babe new born, Dinkie Dawson a second time went past the old-gold-and-crimson umbrella, with beret to match, of the Club Mascot.

Whether it was design or pure accident,

who shall say, yet by some occult means that symbol of good luck became a menace to the stately progress of the Cup. Its bearer, carrying his head very high, not looking either to the right or to the left of him, deigned not so much as half a glance at the umbrella athwart his path. To the perfectly charming old-gold-and-crimson beret he was just as impervious.

You would have thought . . . but it's no use thinking!

Not half a glance did the great man give to that delightful creature as he back-heeled—back-heeled, mark you!—her umbrella out of his path with his clever left foot. Neatly done, of course, but a keen observer felt that had the fair owner of the umbrella blocked the hero's path at that sublime moment, she might easily have shared its fate.

The observer in question was so lost in contemplation of the scene that he received a pretty sharp nudge on his own account as the Cup was borne past him, for you mustn't forget, even if he did, that he was standing with his mouth as well as his eyes wide open plumb in the middle of the top step of those red-carpeted stairs. The King of England and two Royal Dukes were in his purview, but he was as lost to them as to the triumphal progress of the National Trophy. What truly engaged the whole of his mind was the state of things within the precincts of the old-gold-and-crimson beret. Ginge half dislocated his neck, his eyes went goo-goo in a frantic effort to see for himself.

He did see.

Blood, wave after wave, flowed over the enchanting countenance of the Club Mascot. She bit her lip, her eyes grew dark with imminent tears. The wonder was she did not shed them.

She had been slighted in the presence of Royalty.

In the make-up of Ginger was a Napoleonic strain. He had a faculty in great crises of knowing by instinct the right thing to do. He did not hesitate. Almost before Dink had disappeared with the Cup, and before the King's own departure amid the loud, prolonged and respectful cheers of his subjects, Ginger had not only grasped the situation, he had acted upon it.

He bent over the fair occupant of the end seat; it was the work of an instant, it had an uncanny decision. "Come on to tea at the Corner House. And then we'll get along to the pictures."

Just that in a hoarse but intensely audible whisper which could not fail to pierce the old-gold-and-crimson beret. Followed a masterful hand on a rather bewildered arm. Nay, so bewildered was that arm it was unable to withdraw the fatal umbrella from the path of oncoming Majesty, and the gangway was very narrow, ere the King of England was literally treading upon it.

Well no, hardly literally!

The First Gentleman in the Land was not at all likely to take a liberty of that kind with a lady's umbrella.

As for back-heeling . . . Well, I ask you!

A loyal subject with a chrysanthemum top, a natural quick thinker, sprang boldly forward, put forth a hand, relieved a trying situation of all embarrassment.

Sir Walter Raleigh himself could not have done it better.

Old-gold-and-crimson umbrella aloft in his brave right hand, Ginge waved and shouted three times three as the First Gentleman in the Land passed *otium cum dignitate* down the red-carpeted stairs. Other grandees ditto, followed ditto. Not least among these, at the tail of a long procession, was the august Chairman of the Blackhampton Rovers. His large red face was beaming with joy. He was just the happiest man in the world. Suddenly his eye was caught by the magic talisman waved ecstatically before him. He took it as a personal tribute.

And then Mr. Augustus Higginbotham recognised the forceful personality of the Club trainer.

"Ginge, me lad, Palace Restaurant this evenin', seven-thirty sharp. There'll be a knife and fork for you. It's a dinner to the team. I'm in the Chair. The Mayor and the Member are comin'. Seven-thirty sharp, boy. Palace Restaurant."

A just reward of honest worth. It was also a royal command. George Rex was King of England; *pari passu*, in that great hour the Chairman of the Rovers was the King of Blackhampton.

One hour later Ginge and the Mascot, at a famous teashop in Oxford Street, were seated at a cosy table which they had all to themselves. In spite of the fact that Ginge was due one hour hence at a banquet of many courses, he ordered a sumptuous tea. In vain the Mascot, who had inherited a fine strain of prudence from a Scottish grandmother, counselled that virtue. Eggs, sausage rolls, honey, three kinds of cake—he had lunched but lightly and a long time

ago, and so had she, but in any case Ginge was determined to do things well.

"Don't forget your invite to the Palace." The Mascot was removing with dainty fingers the top of an egg.

"I'm not forgettin'," said Ginge, but Scottish prudence looked a little dubious.

Honey came next, and then a lovely dish of iced cakes. The Mascot continued to look dubious.

"Seven-thirty sharp, the Governor said. You'll simply not be able to look at anything."

"You think not?" And Ginge looked at Miss Chadwick in a most masterful way. Even if you don't pretend to be an oil-painting and you hardly look your best in plus-fours, it's a way that every woman secretly admires.

"Get outside that cream puff and then take a whack at this honey. It's prime."

"But really, Mr. Jukes . . ."

"Yes, really, Miss Chadwick. An' that dinner is no business of yours, anyway."

Some tea it was. And then Ginge, having paid the bill and tipped the Nippy a shilling, remarked, "And now, Miss C, we'll get across the road to the pictures."

"There won't be time for those, I'm afraid, if you are to be at the Palace at seven-thirty."

"Oh yes, there will."

"But it's nearly seven already."

Ginger, however, knew his own mind. Leading the old-gold-and-crimson beret firmly down the stairs, with quiet competence he piloted it across Oxford Street, that dangerous maelstrom, into the picture house wherein Mary and Doug and other celebrities were showing. Miss Chadwick was fain to admire the poise of his character as he fixed her in an excellent seat in the middle of the grand tier. All the same, she felt it her duty to remind him that it was now after seven and that he was due at the banquet to the Cup winners in less than half an hour.

With the lights so low and his knee next hers, Ginge seemed in some danger of forgetting it. Instead of yielding to the gentle reminder, a powerful arm slowly encircled the waist of the Mascot.

"Oh, Mr. Jukes—please." A low-voiced protest.

"Call me Ginge." That, too, was low-voiced; but the tone was Napoleon-at-Jena.

Quite a thrill passed through the Mascot. When the lights were out and the man's appearance was merged, so to speak, in the man himself, there was something about him that was terribly compelling.

"Fireworks in the old town to-night." Ginge took the neatly gloved hand of the Mascot in a virile paw. "An' didn't I say we'd win by two clear goals?"

Miss Chadwick owned that he had. "I do hope you put that in your coupon."

"What do you think? Rovers 2—0. I gave it exact in all my coupons. I hope you did likewise, Silly Milly."

An unpardonable liberty, "Silly Milly"; but the lights were out. There was Doug himself as D'Artagnan, the Rovers had won the Cup, it was an immortal hour in the world's history.

"Silly Milly." It really was a liberty and it was emphasised by a tense pause, but if this was not a moment to take a chance there never would be one.

"Oh, Ginge," came a dreaming voice, "if only you could win the prize—or I could—or we both could!"

"Pigs might fly," mused Ginge. That is to say one half of his mind toyed with that fantastic thought, while the other half was engaged with a vista, perhaps equally fantastic. To the no small detriment of D'Artagnan and Milady, a sort of illuminated signboard found its way on to the screen.

The legend upon that signboard ran:

W. H. JUKES, NEWSAGENT.

LICENSED TO SELL TOBACCO.

In this epic moment two hearts seemed to beat as one. Again the dreaming voice: "Ginge, it's a quarter past seven. Mr. Higginbotham said seven-thirty punctual."

"Never mind him. I've invited you to the pictures."

"But if you're late he won't like it."

"Then he'll have to lump it."

"Oh, Ginge!"

"I'm not goin'."

"Not going!"

"You was invited to the pictures before I was invited to the Palace."

A second thrill ran through Miss Chadwick at those cool and deliberate words.

"Oh, Ginge, you can't possibly say that. Besides, I want you to go to that dinner."

"Do you really, now?" And Ginge in the darkness gave what can only be described as a sudden and ferocious bite at the Mascot's cheek.

Said the dreaming voice, "If you don't

go to that dinner what excuse will you make to the Governor ? "

" I shall just tell him I wasn't hungry."

" Not hungry ! Oh, Ginge ! " the Mascot gasped. And, very slowly and delicately, with a neat wash-leather glove she went over the offside of a perfectly delightful countenance in order to find out how much of it was missing.

However, the whole of her countenance seemed still to be there, more or less. But not hungry ! Oh, Ginge !

AND THAT IS ONLY A STEP.

I WANT to go out into the forests alone,
Live clean and simply,
And bear, suffer and experience all its life :
Ache a bit from an unlucky branch in a spruce bed,
Curse the flies and the heat, feel hungry, shiver
In the evening wind, and know fear
When the lightning plays skittles with the tallest firs :
Aye, and smell the sweet rich air filtered through dew-drenched larches in the morning and all alive with sunlight :
Dive cleaving into crystal deeps whence I had fought and drawn exultantly a great black bass—
Thrill to the breathless speed of the rapids, then sigh with a deep breath when tired wrists are rested in the smooth below :
I want to go out into the forests alone,
And struggle in the tangled brush
Upwards until the woods are sparse and the steel-shod boots
Dash the soft muffling needles aside to ring on rock,
Upwards till hands help feet, above the shoulders of the pines,
Where the air is thin : a little snow in the crevice now—
Looking back across the valley and the plains seems more than half across the world.
Night and blankets that cannot keep out the clean cold,
Sleepless beneath a sky wakened to a thousand million new and blazing lights man never sees below.
Then dawn . . . dawn . . . Dawn !
I want to go out into the forests alone,
But I am afraid.
I am soft from the cities, dependent, parasitical,
Eviscerated.
I can't, I am afraid.

And that is only a step on the journey to God.

WALTER P. KENNEDY.



"Colonel Boyle gravely looked down on the boy who faced him with so ardent an appeal."

TRUMPETER DANN

By ALLAN SWINTON

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

COLONEL BOYLE, commanding the —th Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery, gravely looked down on the boy who faced him with so ardent an appeal. A slim lad, straight as a lance as he stood at attention, with his cap at a gallant cock on his black curls, and his grey eyes eager and earnest, from his spurred heels to his gleaming cap-badge eloquent of his upbringing in the shadow, and in reverence, of the regiment.

"I'm sorry," the Colonel was saying, "but it's quite impossible. The regulation is that no trumpeter under seventeen can go on active service. You're six months short of that."

Trumpeter Dann grinned disarmingly, like an Irish cherub. "But what's six

months, sir? I won't be any different in just six months, will I? Couldn't you fix it somehow, sir, please?"

The Colonel smiled. "I wouldn't be so concerned, my boy. You'll be in it soon enough. Every man who's ever worn uniform will be, before it's through—and millions that haven't." A shadow touched him as his imagination pictured the red future. "Make the best of these six months. Enjoy them. They may be the last you'll get—ever. Few of us soldiers will come through *this* war. Remember that."

Dann's face showed bewilderment, incredulity; then, all of a sudden, fear. The battery, *his* battery, to go to war without him?

"But you don't understand, sir," he burst out. "I *got* to go. I *belong* to the battery! I been with it all my life. An' I'd be left here at the depot and sent over when I'm old enough with some—some rotten field battery. An'—an'—there's my horse, an' the silver trumpet, an' all. I'll lose 'em!"

The Colonel's lined face moved in a strangely tender way as he realised the depth of the boy's feeling.

"I'm very sorry, Dann, but the regulation is clear. There's no way round it. The return has been made and your replacement has arrived. Of course, I'll see that you go direct to 'X' Battery as soon as you're old enough."

Dann knew his men, those rather simple-minded soldiers who know no law save "Regulations"; no loyalty save to their regiment. The truth, and the inexorable finality of it, came to him like a blow. He paled, his lips shook, and the tears stood in his grey eyes. "I—I—please, sir——" he faltered. Then he could control his lips no longer.

The Colonel came from behind his desk and put a hand on the shoulder, very slight and tense under the khaki tunic. "Never mind, my boy. The time will pass, and this will not matter then. You'll not go to any other battery, I can promise you that."

Dann swallowed desperately, struggling to control the impulse to defy the Colonel, to say that he must and would go, in spite of any regulation ever drafted. But discipline, and the blood of old Sergeant-Major Dann, veteran of twenty campaigns in a dozen countries, triumphed. The slight figure stiffened, and the spurred heels clicked as Dann saluted. "Thank you, sir," he said steadily, turned and clanked from the room with that devil-may-care swagger of superiority affected by all horse artillerymen.

Colonel Boyle had only commanded this brigade since his promotion from "A" Battery in another station, two months ago, and so was not yet familiar with the intimate history of the personnel. He turned to the regimental sergeant-major, Cullen.

"A fine boy, Sergeant-Major."

"Chip off the old block, sir. Son of old Sergeant-Major Dann of 'X' Battery, born in the Service, too. His father and mother both died of cholera at Bikaneer in '02, and a corporal's wife took Danny in. He joined as a boy the minute he was old enough. This'll fair break him up, sir."

"Too bad. Too bad," murmured the Colonel, as he returned to his anxious duties. It was a tense time for him; for it was August, 1914, and he was under orders for Belgium, to plunge with the rest of the cavalry across the path of the onrolling enemy.

Once outside the Brigade office, Trumpeter Dann's shoulders drooped. His world was tottering. Though Big Hayes, Major of "X" Battery, had told him that he had been ordered to leave his trumpeter behind on account of his age, Danny had not believed the regulation to be insurmountable and had appealed to the Colonel in confidence that the matter would be adjusted. But he had failed. In seven hours the battery, *his* battery, was to embark on the ship that could be seen anchored in the harbour, from the slope of the Downs where the barracks stood, and he would not be with it. His heart was sick, his feet leaden. He felt deserted and angry, but in a curious way at the same time disgraced, as though somehow he had failed his comrades. It was *his* battery; home, parents, brothers and sister to him. The sounds of his babyhood had been the blare of trumpets, the tramp of hoofs and the rumble of gun-wheels; his playmates the swaggering, bronzed troopers with the sword-belts and the spurs. Since he had been old enough to sound a trumpet he had called them up at mornings, and to stables, boot-and-saddle, and to bed. And now, in the hour of their proving, when they were to show in blood and fire if they were worthy of the care that had been lavished on them through the years of peace, he was to be left behind, and a red-faced lout who had arrived that morning from the depot with the balance of their war strength, would ride his gay black charger, and sound the silver trumpet

that the battery had won from Corps Commander as the smartest battery in the Army.

Down past the gun-park he dragged his feet, where the gunners swarmed like bees around the gleaming thirteen-pounders, packing on equipment, fitting breech and muzzle covers, filling limbers with ammunition, to the stables, ringing with the stamp of hoofs on cobbles, the rattle of chains and the clatter of many spurred heels. To Danny, the smell of the stables was the sweetest smell on earth. Saddled and harnessed, the horses stood, the sabres on the outriders' saddles gleaming curved in the sunlight.

Troopers in full kit sweated about them, while dapper sergeants clanked to and fro, keen-eyed to see that every last, least detail of their sub-sections—one gun, with its two attendant waggons—was present and impeccable.

At last he came to the small separate stable where the horses of officers and trumpeters stood. His horse, Jerry, was there, lean, sleek and restive, his snaky black head waving to and fro with laid-back ears in playful simulation of viciousness, as the strange trumpeter saddled him. Danny's gorge rose. This was *his* horse, *his* saddle, soft-dressed and polished for loving hours till the leather glowed like old mahogany, the brass and steel like gold and silver. The sight of the fellow busy about him was like the turning of the knife in a wound.

The new man sensed at once the hostility in the drooping mouth and smouldering grey eyes of the slim boy who came into the stall. But he was an old soldier, not to be ruffled overmuch by such a thing. He knew who Danny was, and stepped aside civilly enough, as he knotted the blue-and-gold silk cord of the trumpet, Danny's beloved silver trumpet, to fit his own broad chest. Danny went into the stall and scratched Jerry's ear, and the raking black charger snorted, flared a red nostril and nibbled at his cheek. Danny hid behind the muscled shoulder and tried to keep back the tears.

He must have been there a long time, for suddenly he came back to earth at the sound of the battery sergeant-major's voice saying, " All right, Trumpeter. Sound 'em out ! "

Something seemed to snap in Danny's brain, and he was out of the stall in a flash, startling Jerry so that he shied violently. The new trumpeter was outside, in the brave posture affected by cavalry trumpeters about their appointed business. He gave the silver trumpet the little flirt they give before putting it to their lips. Then Danny was on him like a snake and had snatched it down. The fellow whipped about and his eyes hardened.

" You can have it if you want it," he said slowly, " but you can't get it like that without a fight."

Danny glared, feeling the eyes of half the battery on him in his display of passion. Then, " I'm sorry," he said miserably, and was turning away when the other stopped him.

Trumpeters are strangely alike the army through. There is something about their job that breeds in them a queer, deep sentiment. The new man grinned, and handed the battery's silver trumpet back to Danny with a sort of bow. Danny hesitated, took it, swallowed, blinked twice, then clicked his heels, flung up his head, put it to his lips and sounded, sounded the " Fall in " for " X " Battery for the last time before it went to war. Sweet, clear and tremulous the call pealed out. The last note quivered away exquisitely to silence. Danny swung down to the " At ease, after sounding," then thrust the trumpet at his successor and flung himself into the stable and up to the hay-loft to conceal his grief.

But when the battery had paraded and the inspection by the Colonel and the Major was over, and the band struck up to play them out of their home station, Danny was at the gate, waiting for them to go by.

Stiff at attention he stood, though his heart was leaden, and saluted as Big Hayes, the long, lean Major, who knew Danny and loved him well, with the new trumpeter at his heels, went by, followed by the prancing files of the battery staff. Then one by one they rumbled past, six grim, sleek guns, with a sergeant at the head of each straining team, and the files of mounted gunners with their sabres and their carbines, sidling and clattering after each second waggon. An officer was at the head of each two guns ; Conover, the veteran, Martin, and little Dale, and in the rear came the farriers, the quartermaster-sergeant, with the cook's cart, the water-cart, and the big waggon for baggage, and last of all, the Captain, Gilroy.

When all was past Dan could not bear to let them from his sight, and walked wearily after them down the cobbled hills to the docks where the steamers lay.

"X" BATTERY was very tired. For two days, except for snatches taken in full kit on boat or train, they had not slept. Early that morning they had detrained, eaten a hasty meal and marched straight west. Near the sea, to their northward, rumour had it that cavalry scouts were already engaged, and hussars of their own van were hourly expecting their scouts to find touch with the Uhlans.

It was night, and the tiny village where the battery lay was very quiet. In a field at the end of the single street the horses drooped to the long lines strung between two waggons, with the stable-pickets patrolling them, and the sentries posted further out, while the weary troopers slept in the near-by houses. With the imminence of battle, no man undressed. They downed poles, loosed girths and removed bits, fed and watered men and horses, then, equipped as they were, lay down for the few hours' rest they might hope to get. The night was darkish but clear, and in a little copse nightingales sang as if their hearts would burst.

Snug among hay in a cart in the courtyard of the end house, where he had tended needy horses after the march, Carney, the corporal farrier, slept in utter abandonment to weariness. Close to where he lay stood the cook's cart and the baggage waggon. The battery had sunk into rest for more than an hour, and only the nightingales, the snores of the men, the snort and tramp of horses and the step of an occasional sentry could be heard when the tarpaulin covering the baggage waggon was stealthily pushed back and a tousled head peered out.

Satisfied soon that all was clear, a slim figure wriggled from under the sheet and, dropping to the turf, stood painfully stretching limbs in which the pains of cramp had become agonies. Then, after more strained listening for danger, it slipped from the waggon and tiptoed to where Carney slept, and crouched down in the shadow of the farm cart. Soon it climbed swiftly and silently into the cart beside the farrier.

Carney was haled back from delectable dreams by a gentle shaking and a hand on his mouth. He came to with a plunge and an oath, and sprang to his elbow, flinging off his assailant.

"*Shhhhh!*" came a tense whisper. "Don't make a noise. It's me, Danny."

Carney grabbed his shoulder and glared up in the gloom at the face close above him.

"Danny! Ye limb of Satan! How by the saints come ye here?"

"Quiet, Carney. Let me come down low there, in the hay."

Carney made room and the two sank down, very close together.

"I went down to the dock to see you off, and I couldn't bear to stay, and the waggon was there, and I squeezed in under the tarpaulin. I'm starving, Carney. Got any chow?"

"Oh, ye wildcat!" Carney groped in his pocket. "Here's a biscuit. No, wait. I've got a yard of this Frinch bread in my valise. Better than hard-tack." He rummaged at the cart-head. "Here y'are. Good Frinch bread, an' there's cider in me bottle."

Then there was silence but for the munching of Trumpeter Dann as he relieved his hunger, and the gurgle of the sweet French cider. At last he ceased and relaxed on the hay. Carney's hand was on his arm. The two were old and trusted cronies. "An' now what'll ye do? Ye'll niver get away with this, boy."

"I don't know an' I don't care. I'll stay hid till we go into action, then I'll come out and chance it. They can't send me back on the spot. I'm goin' to hold the Major's horse in the first scrap, if it's the last thing I do. You'll have to help me with grub though, Carney. Shove me a water-bottle and some chow under the waggon sheet after dark. Then if I can't get out I'll not starve. Nobody need ever know you had a hand in it." Danny was concerned for this, for such a conspiracy in the face of discipline would certainly cost the corporal farrier his stripes.

"Oh, sure, Danny boy. I'm not afraid of that. But why, why didn't ye stay in barricks while ye could?"

"I just *couldn't*, that's all. I'll be all right. Now you'll need your sleep, Carney. I'm near mad with cramp, so long, and I'm goin' to take off my boots and stretch here in the dark as much as I can. What time's reveille, if there's no alarm?"

"T'ree o'clock, Danny. I don't like this, boy. No good can come of it."

"All right, Carney, I know. But I had to do it. Now don't you worry. See that I get grub and forget about me except for that. Now I'm goin'."

Carney gripped his arm with a fist like steel, in the dark. "Ye'll have yer way, Danny, I know. An' Carney'll see ye through. I'm that tired . . ." His voice

got thick and trailed off, and Danny returned the grip and slipped over the cart-tail. He stood in the dark and took off his boots, then tramped softly to and fro, to and fro in the shadow, working his limbs and filling his lungs luxuriously with the fragrant air.

It was not long short of reveille when he stealthily regained the big waggon and slipped into his hiding-place, and he was barely settled before the guard were rousing the men, the nearness of the enemy precluding the use of the trumpet.

All the long day he lay in his corner, tortured by cramp and half stifled. He contrived to worm around so that he could peer through the waggon slats, and saw the fair fields of France crawl by while he listened to the familiar voices of his comrades. Sometimes a motor-cyclist came up with messages; sometimes cavalry orderlies, hussars, lancers, dragoons, came and went. But the day passed eventlessly, except for the rumour that the scouts were in touch and on the far left flank.

That night they bivouacked in a small field with high hedges, removed from any habitation. Danny waited impatiently for dark, his eye glued to the slot, watching his tired comrades picket and groom and feed their chargers, watching with watering mouth while their rations were issued, while they were dismissed in the gloaming to lie down behind the horse-lines for sleep, in all probability their last sleep before battle. He grew impatient for the time when he might slip out and stretch his aching limbs. He had finished the last of Carney's loaf at noon, and wondered whether the farrier would appear with more. Danny had no plans. He was with the battery on service, and he was happy. When the time came he would know what to do.

At last the dark came down, and soon a figure materialised close to him and lounged nonchalantly up to the waggon.

"Hey, Danny!" came Carney's hoarse whisper.

"Here, Carney."

Carney lifted the tarpaulin. "Here's bread an' bully and a water-bottle. Are ye all right?"

"Fine an' dandy, Carney. You're a real pal!"

"'Tis nothing. *Shhhhh!* Look out." Carney slipped into the dark as some sound alarmed him.

Danny ate and drank with avid enjoyment, while the thin gloom thickened to full dark. The night was clear and starlit.

At last, save for the clink of horse-chains, the snort and stamp of weary feet, and the odd snore of a man, quiet lay on the bivouac. With infinite caution Danny slipped out and lowered himself to the turf. He would steal away from the battery and take a walk through the country-side. At the thought his spirits rose. To-morrow his durance would be over, and whether they sent him back or not he would at least be with them till their first fight was over. And who knew how long it might endure?

There would be a sentry at the gate, he was sure, so angling across the field, skirting the horse-lines with their familiar warm odour, he reached the hedge and stealthily squeezed himself through. Then he turned and went up the road, keeping to the soft turf at the side. There would be a picket and a sentry at the first cross-roads, and he must observe the utmost caution till he had passed them.

True to his cavalry training, the previous evening, as soon as he had known it was near bivouac time, he had made careful note of cross-roads, hills, etcetera, as they were passed. The cross-roads, where he was morally certain the picket would be, was some six hundred yards away, and as soon as he was close enough to be in danger of being heard by the sentry, he got through the hedge and began to make a wide circle, with the cross-roads in the centre. Once round the picket he could take to the road again and have a hard walk.

It was good fun, stalking his own comrades this way, and as he neared where he knew they must be, he could not resist the temptation to go close. Exactly where the picket would be, he had no means of knowing. The sentry would be on the road itself, with the picket in the corner of one of the adjoining fields. If he should happen to be on the same side of the road as the picket, he might see them.

He was creeping along, crouching low and peering in what he thought was the right direction, and enjoying the excitement, when suddenly the clear sky ahead of him was blotted out and the bulky figure of a man, about ten yards away and rising to his feet, was outlined against it. Danny's heart turned over. The flat spiked helmet silhouetted on the sky was unmistakable. Then other figures rose beside the first, there was a swift rush of feet all round him and the sound of a struggle in the corner of the field. He had stalked into the midst of a German party raiding the picket!

In the first shock of the occurrence Danny stood frozen, and before he could make any move the scuffle waned. There had been no shot. Only the sound of savage blows, a stifled shout, and now, silence. Danny's heart raced. The picket and sentry had been skilfully rushed with overwhelming strength and blotted out without alarm.

His hesitation was only momentary. Alone and unarmed, he could do nothing for the picket. But the battery! The battery would be attacked with no more warning than could be given by the sentry at the gate. He must get to them.

He turned and laid his legs to the ground as hard as they would go. But the field was very rough, and he stumbled and fell at once. No good, that way. The road was better going. He swung and made the hedge. It was thick at that place, and as he was struggling to get through there came a strange rushing sound from the road and figures came looming up in the dark. Tall and forbidding, two by two, with spiked helmets and the barrels of rifles sticking up above their shoulders, they swept past, cyclists, advancing to the attack of "X" Battery.

Danny's heart sank, and he felt physically sick. He could do nothing. The battery would be taken completely by surprise. If he only had a rifle, he could open fire and give the alarm at the sacrifice of himself. A rifle! Ah! Perhaps he could find one where the picket had been rushed. Yes, there was a chance. But as he turned to try it the cyclists stopped and dismounted. He could feel rather than see them, stretching two and two along the road in each direction, silent and motionless. They would proceed on foot. But there was a chance to beat them to it now, and Danny swung again and made the best pace he could through the long grass on the other side of the hedge.

With thankfulness, he realised that they were still halted. Scouts were reconnoitring, no doubt. Hurry! Oh, hurry! Go, though your heart bursts, your ankles wrench sickeningly again and again, and the brambles tear your hands! The battery must be awake when the attack comes. How could these Germans get so close without alarming the cavalry of the vanguard? There was something wrong somewhere. Someone had blundered. Oh! Get on! Maybe you're past where the head of the battalion is on the road. Good going there. He found the hedge stealthily and peered through. Glory! The road was empty. Now he was on it, running with sobbing breath on the turf at its side.

By and by he caught a blur in the gloom ahead of him. He stopped and stood, with his heart pounding. Three Germans with their bicycles, waiting. Almost at once a fourth joined them and they all mounted and fled past Danny in the gloom. No need to wonder now what was to happen. These were the advance point. They had located the battery and would lead the battalion on. Once started, they would come like the wind and be on the battery before it could awaken.

Danny abandoned all attempts at caution, took the middle of the road, and ran. He risked there being more of the enemy between him and the battery, and risked being shot by his own sentry.

A whiff of the horse-lines told him he was near, and at the same moment the sentry challenged sharply: "Halt! Who goes there?"

"Friend!" screamed Danny. "Give the alarm. Night attack!"

As the sentry's rifle cracked he dived through the hedge. There was no time for explanations, he well knew the cyclists could not be twenty yards behind him.

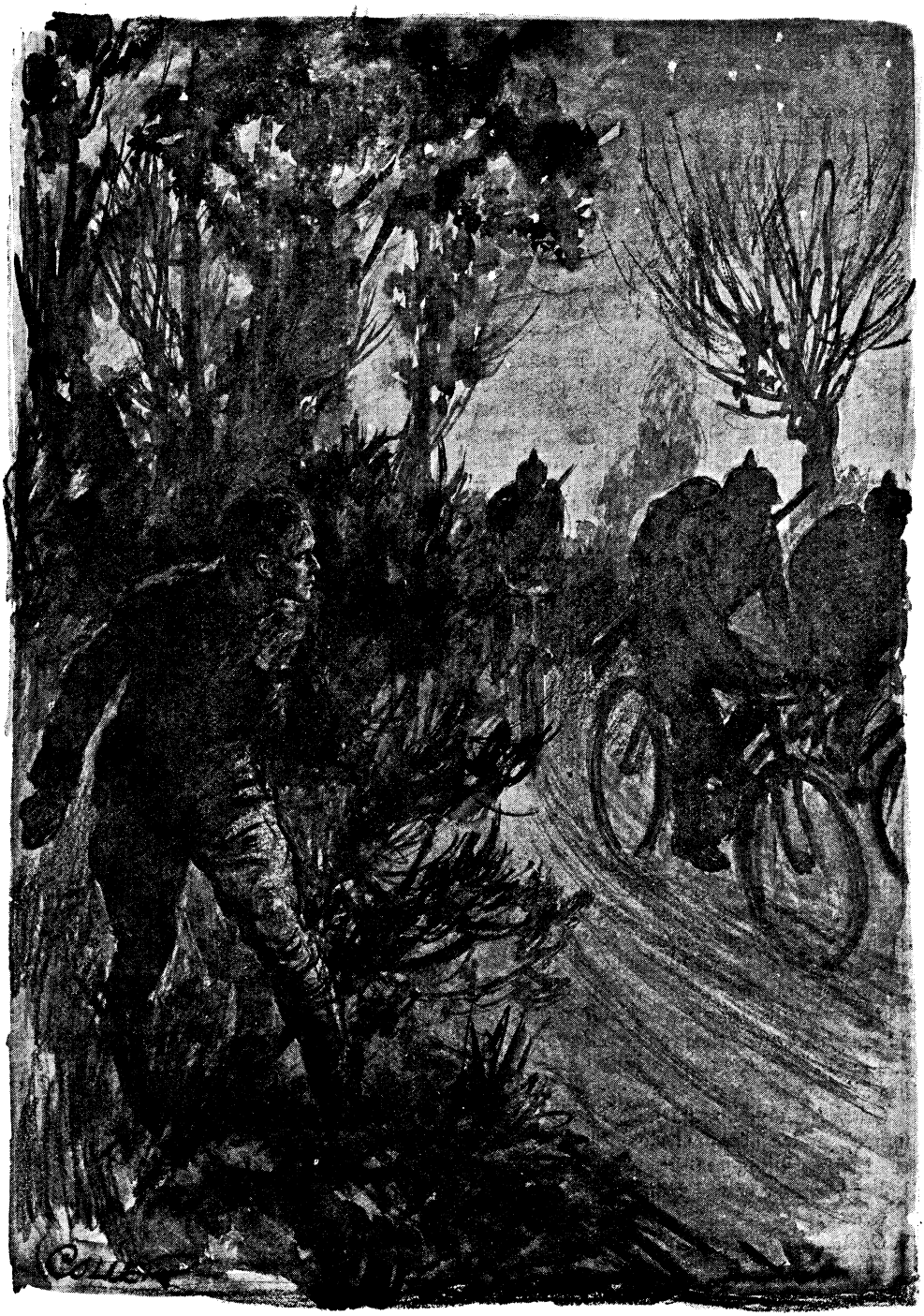
After the sentry's shot there was a silence, as the fellow wondered what had become of the warning voice, and then the corporal of the guard dashed on to the road.

"W'ot's up, you?"

"Someone come up the road yellin' murder. I dunno where he went. Ah, look there!" He flung up his rifle and fired at figures that hurled upon them from the dark.

Danny dashed yelling down the lines till he found the place he sought, at the end of the horse-lines, where the trumpeter slept by the Major's charger. Watson, the new trumpeter, sleeping a sleep that mere yelling could not break, was wakened by someone feeling unceremoniously among his clothes. He struck at the intruder blindly. Then Danny had what he sought, and high, fierce and shrill, like a fighting eagle's scream, sounded the "Alarm," the one sharp, tearing note, again and again and again.

Gunners and drivers rolled out and to their feet with oaths and startled queries. Horses reared and kicked. No one knew what was happening, but the trumpet screamed on, pleadingly, insistently, terribly, and in blind instinct men went for their swords, their carbines. Then the guard, following the



"Two by two, with spiked helmets and the barrels of rifles sticking up above their shoulders, they swept past, cyclists, advancing to the attack of 'X' Battery."

corporal, joined the *mêlée* on the road, and rifles cracked. The Germans, already instructed, abandoned all concealment and, leaving their machines, dropped into the ditch and opened fire through the hedge on the defenceless battery.

But this was better for "X" Battery. Here was something to fight. Conover, the senior subaltern, who had rallied his section in anticipation of a rush of some kind, yelled, "There they are! Get into 'em!" and with a revolver in one hand and a peg-maul in the other, led. With an indignant snarl, tugging at swords, and clubbing carbines for fear of shooting each other, the men tore across the field and into the hedge, and a savage dog-fight joined all along the line. The men now at grips, bullets ceased to rip among the helpless horses. Martin, another subaltern, was organising a party to hold in readiness for some new attack. Danny heard him bellowing and dashed up.

"There's a whole battalion at least on that road with bicycles. Couldn't we get a gun through the gate and shoot down the road, sir?"

"Heaven!" cried Martin. "That many? I'll show 'em. Hey! Number 6 gun! Manhandle her down to the gate!" A knot of men hurled themselves on the gun and ran it down the field through the gate. There was a whirl of fighting men there, grunts and screams and flashing steel, with an occasional pistol-shot.

Martin's bellow came over it all. "Action right!" Everyone, realising the import of the moment, abandoned the fight and turned to the gun. She was rammed into the press, wrenched round and unlimbered. As the trail dropped the gunner slipped into the seat. Martin's voice was steady and joyful. "Straight down the road! Range, zero. Angle of sight, zero. Fuse two—Gun-fire!"

Crash! A yellow flash lit the struggling figures, and a shrapnel shell tore down the road breast-high, and burst in a shower of bullets twenty yards from the gun-muzzle.

Crash!

Crash!

Sweeping down the road through the waiting enemy who had not been able to advance into action, the carnage was terrible, but a number of the rear companies had entered the next field to outflank the battery, and, safe from the gun, these now opened fire. Dale, with a party, left the original *mêlée* and dashed for them, while the gun fired continually down the road.

After he had spoken to Martin, Danny had made for the horse-lines and found Jerry, to his inexpressible relief, unhurt by the first burst of fire, though there were other horses kicking on the ground.

Now that he had started, Danny thought, he might as well make a job of it. Who knew how many enemy might be between the battery and the cavalry in front? Someone had blundered. There must be a gap, and it must be closed. He saddled Jerry swiftly but carefully. The battery was too busy holding its own to take any other action at the moment. Every man was in the hedges or on the road fighting desperately. He swung up and headed for the second gate in the field, at the diagonally opposite corner from where the gun was in action. There were sentries there, waiting, beside themselves with apprehension, yet not daring to leave their posts to enter the fight on the other side. Danny dashed past them and was at a split gallop down the road before they had recovered. He sat down and rode for all he knew; eastward, toward where he knew the supporting squadrons must be a mile or two behind.

He was deliriously happy. He had deserted, committed the most heinous crime in the Service, smuggled himself overseas against orders, and by his act had almost certainly saved the battery from annihilation or ignominious capture. Whatever happened, he would be justified, though he knew discipline would not be appeased. But he had his trumpet on his back and his horse between his knees; he was doing his job as he wanted to do it, and as he knew the spirit of old Sergeant-Major Dann, long dead, would have him do it. It was enough. He was content.

On through the dark he tore, the hoof-drum music in his ears, south and east, the wind whistling by and the pale stars above. Behind him, the thirteen-pounder cracked spasmodically, and before him the steady "*Snork*," "*Snork*," "*Snork*" of Jerry's breathing sounded.

By and by there came a startled challenge before him. "*Halt! Halt there!*" He crashed into a knot of horses in the road. Fierce hands seized his bridle and the curved gleam of a sabre hung above him.

Almost unseated, Jerry on his haunches at the impact, he gasped: "Friend! 'X' Battery. Where's an officer?"

It was an advance party of lancers, come to see what all the racket was. "Files about!" rapped the sergeant. "Trot. Canterrrr!"

They swept on through the dark into a village where more squadrons were turning out.

"Here, you gunner!" called the sergeant. "Colonel D'Arcy, sir. Galloper from 'X' Battery."

Danny ranged Jerry alongside the officer's charger in the dark.

"Battery attacked by cyclists, sir; one battalion at least. They were holding them all right when I got away."

"What!" swore the lancer. "How'd a battalion get this close? What's the screen doing?"

"They came in from the south, sir," said Danny. "I saw 'em come."

"The devil they did! Got in between us and the French, I'll swear. Is there more than one battalion? Any cavalry?"

"Don't know, sir. But they came fast, an' did their own reconnoitring."

"Chances are that's all, then. We'll soon see, anyway." The cavalry man hesitated a moment, then called, "Major Brady!" There was a whirl and a scurry of hoofs beside them. "Sir!"

"Your four squadrons to support 'X' Battery, attacked from the south by cyclists at Neuf Coq cross-roads. I shall circle with the whole force to take 'em in rear and plug the gap they must have come through. Here's a man from the battery to go with you."

A hoarse order pealed from Brady, looming in the dark on his horse. "'A,' 'B,' 'C,' 'D' squadrons!" A clash of hoofs and flying sparks as the four captains came up and received their instructions. They scattered, and all around rose the orders: "'A' squadron. Mount. Files left." "'D' squadron. Mount . . ." "'B' squadron. Mount . . ."

Major Brady called in the dark: "Where's this gunner?"

"Here, sir!" replied Danny.

"D'you know the way back well enough to gallop it without my bothering with the map?"

"You bet I do, sir." There was no mistaking the enthusiasm.

"You're sure, now. We can't afford a slip."

"Sure, sir."

As they talked more squadrons had wheeled and were off to the flanking operation, the rattle and thunder of their progress dwindling in the night.

"All right, then," decided Brady. He stood up in his stirrups. "By squadrons. Files left. Terrrrrrot!"

"Come on." Danny wheeled Jerry on the bit and threw him into a canter beside Brady, made the head of "A" squadron and hit a dead gallop, with the squadrons thundering behind him.

The ride back seemed not one-hundredth part as long as had the outward ride. Danny had a curious sensation of unreality, as though he was dreaming it all. He noticed that the gun at the battery no longer spoke, and even that there was hardly any rifle-fire. Suppose there had been more enemy—suppose the battery had been silenced and captured—his heart turned over. Not that the battery would be lost, for the force of cavalry swinging round it would be almost sure to take it back again, but for the loss of comrades that it would mean. The capture of the battery would mean that most of them had died fighting.

A mile from the battery they ran into a straggling party of enemy on the road, rode into and over them with sabres swinging. As they came into the last turn, a sentry fired a shot before their shouts reassured him, and a horse in the first file went down with a crash. But at the battery the fight was over. The gun on the road, catching the main body of the raiders in enfilade, had broken them utterly.

Hayes, the Major, was storming about the position, posting his men and guns in preparation for further trouble. He dared not move, for on the march at close quarters with infantry he would be more defenceless even than he was now. Danny heard Brady call: "Battery Commander there?"

"Here," from Hayes. "Who's that?"

"Four squadrons —th Lancers. Rest of the regiment circling to catch these birds in rear."

Hayes laughed grimly. "Don't think they *have* much rear now. Obliged, just the same. How the devil did they get through, I want to know?"

Danny slipped off Jerry and led him away in the dark. There was a strange glow at his heart, a strange contentment. He was home, in the only home he knew, among the grim guns, the troopers and the horses. And he was assured that he had done well. To-morrow—that could take care of itself.



DAWN broke over "X" Battery through a thin and pearly mist. Four guns had been dragged to the roads, back to back, to sweep them should a further attack occur. The lancers and the battery's drivers were disposed with their carbines strategically. With the daylight Hayes and his officers began to take stock of the damage.

Twenty odd horses lay dead in the lines, killed in the fight, or later shot for wounds. A dozen quiet shapes beneath brown blankets testified to the fierceness of the *mêlée*, and from the hedgerow one or two more were being carried, disclosed by the daylight. A crowd of wounded, friend and foe, lay or sat in the corner of the field, tended by the doctor who had arrived from brigade.

"Sergeant-Major," Hayes called. "Parade the battery and call the roll. The lancers will cover."

Sheay saluted. "Very good, sir."

With the lancer, Brady, Hayes walked across to the wounded.

"That was a good man you sent for us, last night," said Brady.

Hayes looked at him curiously. "What d'you mean? I sent no one."

"Well, a chap of yours came up just as we were getting into the saddle. He came back with us."

Hayes was mystified, but by now they had come to the place he sought, where Watson, the trumpeter, lay with a thigh smashed by a bullet. Very pale and still he lay, with his leg in rude splints, and covered by an army blanket.

"How d'you feel, Watson?" asked the Major concernedly.

The trumpeter smiled wanly. "Pretty good, sir."

"The battery is indebted to you, Watson. But for your warning this might have been serious. The picket was overpowered and we were surprised completely."

Watson bit his lip, glancing from one officer to another. "It wasn't me sounded, sir."

"What!"

"It wasn't me."

"Then who the . . . ?"

"Dunno, sir. Someone came up while I was asleep and grabbed me trumpet."

"Oh. That's curious, Watson. You've no idea who it was?"

"No, sir."

"Hm." Hayes turned to a corporal. "Tell the sergeant-major I want him."

But the sergeant-major was already on his way across from where the entire battery was paraded for roll call.

"Sergeant-Major," called Hayes. "Watson says . . ." Then, at the expression on the face of Sheay, he stopped. "What is it?"



"'Come on.' Danny wheeled Jerry on the bit and threw him into a canter beside Brady, made the head of 'A' squadron, and hit a dead gallop, with the squadrons thundering behind."

"Trumpeter Dann, sir. He's on parade. Says he stowed away in the baggage waggon."

What Hayes thought is not recorded. But his eyebrows climbed. "*Dann?* Bring him here."

Danny came, bright-eyed and very pale, from where, fevered with excitement and apprehension, he had fallen in when the battery paraded, saluted, and waited with beating heart while the Major's keen eyes bored him.

"What's the meaning of this, Dann?" said Hayes at last.

Danny swallowed. "I couldn't bear to be left behind, and I hid in the G.S. waggon. I was going to report myself as soon as we got into action, sir."

"That's the man who came to us," said the Lancer Major.

"I see. . . . Then perhaps it was you who blew the alarm, too, Danny, er—Dann?"

Danny's eyes shone. "Yessir."

"Ummmmm."

"I sneaked out of the lines for a walk, sir, an' was close to the picket when they were rushed, an' I ran back an' sounded, an' got Jerry an' went for the supports right away. I thought you'd be sort of busy . . ." Danny grinned disarmingly. "You won't send me back, will you, sir?"

Major Hayes looked down from his lank height on the boy who had been his trumpeter since he was old enough to sound a trumpet. His face was grim. Meeting his eyes, a chill came over Danny. The ingrained sense of discipline awoke in him, and made him see how flagrant had been his breach of it.

"This is serious, Dann. Insubordination. Absent without leave in time of war. There's no excuse for it. You'll have to answer for it at the depot."

At the words Danny's heart sank. "The depot—then——"

"Yet," went on the Major, "I don't see what it has to do with me. I'll report that you turned up here, of course. But I need men badly. You're here; and till I get other orders, here you'll stay. And . . ." —all at once the Major's official coldness deserted him, and a little gleam lit his blue eyes—"correspondence is slow on active service, Danny. How long is it before you're seventeen?"

WHITE NARCISSUS.

HERE in a sealed globe lies the flower of heaven,
Its sepulchre unlit,
And to no earthly hand has there been given
The power to open it.

Faint breathing, a slight stirring to awaken,
Attempting to arise,
Blind in the darkness, tremulous and shaken
With passion and surprise.

Sharp through a crevice one thin shaft of brightness
Pierces its spangled way:
Brown husks rend with sudden glorious lightness,
The stone is rolled away!

Life out of Death! The straight shoots green and tender
Climb upward through the light;
Young as the morning, young and sweet and slender,
To flower in dazzling white.

Here is a resurrection, here is glory,
(Quick are my tears to start)!
Here is the repetition of a story
A world holds to its heart.

GRACE NOLL CROWELL.

THE HOUSE.

By HELEN MORRIS.

HIDDEN within the heart of you
Lies all that goes to make my life,
For you know all;
And through the years
Have seen my laughter and my fears,
My pain . . . my tears . . .
And you, and only you can know
The fullness of that passion'd glow
That lit the greyness of my days
To flaming ways . . .
For you remember how he came,
And wandered through the daffodils,
And all life sang and sang . . .
Till I forgot the spring,
And the April-scented air seemed dim
Because of him . . .
You knew . . . you knew . . .
That every linnet overhead,
And breeze
That swayed the cypress trees
Seemed dead,
Drowned in the melody
That was his laughter . . .
And after . . . after . . .
Among the orchard grass,
You knew the slender stems
I'd pick or pass . . .
You saw the night I started out
To take that road
From whence there's no returning,
Faltering, because the air
Seemed mad with stars . . .
You knew the yearning
With which I craved for loveliness,
Fretting at dullness,
Faint deceptions, lies . . .
You heard my bitter cries,
And many a sin
I hid within
My heart . . .
You know not part,
But all . . . yea all . . .
My love, my sin, my restless soul,
You know the whole.

WITH ALL MODERN IMPROVEMENTS

By BERTON BRALEY

ILLUSTRATED BY S. BRIAULT

"A VERY good story, Miss Morgan, mighty good stuff," said the editor, looking up from the copy his chief woman feature-writer had laid on his desk; "that's the sort of interview that hits the frails and the men too. We'll get Bill to make some snappy sketches and run it for a page."

Miss Morgan turned away with a pleased smile and Lloyd Hilton, the Sunday editor, jabbed her story on to the copy hook. But despite the fact that he was busy the rest of the afternoon with other work, he couldn't get that story out of his head.



Once, at a great ball where the aristocracy and the commonalty had mingled but failed to mix, Hilton had been introduced to Marjorie Marbeau by one of the men who were crowded about her—an amateur tennis player Hilton had met in a match—and had found her as clever and charming as she was fair to look upon. He had been lucky enough to get one dance with her and to talk to her for perhaps five minutes; after that the Society cordon about her had drawn tight again and he was out in the cold world. And he had never had an opportunity to meet her again. But that had not cured the Sunday editor of a tremendous interest in Miss Marbeau, who, without the possession of any large sum of money, nevertheless seemed to hold a serenely unassailable position in the innermost citadel of Society. Hilton had read of her triumphs at riding, swimming, golf, tennis and dancing, and whenever there was a chance in his Sunday section he "played up" Miss Marbeau. This was good newspaper policy, because the young lady was excellent "copy," always doing unexpected and delightful stunts; but there was also an element of heroine worship in Hilton's splurging of the young woman. This latest interview, however, rather obsessed him. He found himself in agreement with the statements of Miss Marbeau to the *Planet's* reporter, and yet there lurked a whimsical desire to challenge them. He might do this by having somebody else argue against Miss Marbeau's views; he might write a controversial article himself; he might——

With the thought that occurred to him then his face lighted in a queer whimsical grin which didn't seem exactly to belong to the sudden set of jaw that came with it. Evidently Hilton had a hunch that meant something.

"MISS MARBEAU," said the butler, "there is a gentleman on the telephone."

"Who is it?" asked Miss Marbeau.

"He won't give his name. He says, however, it is very important and concerns your future."

"Tell him I'm out," said Miss Marbeau. Then, "I'll talk to him," she decided as suddenly.

She stepped to the 'phone hidden in a flower-box near the doorway.

"This is Miss Marbeau," she said coolly.

"Ah," replied the voice at the other end of the wire, "I merely called up to warn you that I've decided to marry you."

"Who is this?" demanded the young woman, but a click told her the other party had hung up. She laughed in a puzzled fashion as she replaced the receiver.

"Some nut," she remarked slangily, and dismissed the incident, or thought she did. Quite distinct propositions.

Two hours later she ripped open a telegraph envelope and read:

"Merely to remind you of my remark over the 'phone."

The message was unsigned.

"Nerve," said Miss Marbeau. "I wonder who the person is. He really didn't have a bad voice," she added.

At dinner-time that evening the butler brought her a special-delivery letter. Her father and mother were both extremely interested, especially when they saw her flush as she took it from the servant.

"What is it?" they demanded.

"Oh, nothing much," she evaded, as she thrust it in the pocket of her suit—she had not dressed for dinner—"merely a note from a man who promised to remind me of an engagement."

"Why don't you read it?" asked her father.

"Because I know what's in it," replied his daughter, "and anyhow, father dear, it's none of your business."

"Undutiful daughter," he laughed, "I'm reproved. It isn't."

Miss Marbeau got through the dinner without much betrayal of excitement, but her hands itched to open the letter, and when the meal was finished she managed to escape and do so.

It read simply:

"I'd suggest the wedding to be a quiet home affair. Say next month. The exact date I'll leave to you. I hate long engagements, don't you? Do you know that you



"'I merely called up to warn you that I've decided to marry you.'"

are one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen?"

Miss Marbeau's eyes gleamed dangerously. She ripped the letter in two. Then she started to tear up the fragments, but changed her mind and tucked them in her desk.

When she rose the next morning her maid brought her a box about a foot square. She surveyed it dubiously, but concluded, when she heard no ticking inside, that it was not an infernal machine. She dismissed the maid and opened the package. It contained a small phonograph and a single roll. In the same hand as the special-delivery letter were written instructions as to the operation of the machine.

Presently, from the receiver of the instrument, came the voice—slightly squeaky and mechanical, it is true, but the voice she had heard over the telephone. It said:

"When a man is in love it is well for him to distinguish himself from the ordinary wooer if he hopes for success. I not only hope for success but intend to win it. You may wonder why I do not tell you that I love you, but I shall wait to do that face

to face. No one but a faint heart confesses *that* great truth to a woman in any other way."

That was all. Miss Marbeau put the phonograph in a drawer. Her only comment was, "I *do* like his voice, even on the phonograph." All day she tried to fit that voice to her acquaintanceship, but vainly.

She wondered what her unknown suitor would try next. Nothing occurred until the following day, when she was the recipient of a cablegram. It was dated "London," and it contained this message:

"My soul reaches over the sea and back again to you. It is a large and comprehensive soul and includes the world in its scope. And you are the world. Unlike Alexander, I sigh for no more worlds to conquer."

Miss Marbeau filed that cablegram away with the other exhibits. But her mind was busy on the problem of a man who called up one day on the 'phone and sent a cablegram from London two or three days later.

Quite naturally, too, her mind did not cease to ponder when she opened a wireless telegram delivered the same day, and sent, apparently, from the American liner *St. Louis*, which, she discovered on looking up the sailings, was a thousand miles out from New York.

"This wireless would indicate that my physical being was at sea," the message read, "but my mind is on solid land. It is grounded in the determination to make you mine—eventually, why not soon?"

Now Miss Marbeau had an inordinate appreciation of brains. But she was also intrigued by the spirit of romance. The men who had the time for romance in her set, it seemed to her, had very little brains. And the men who had the brains were absorbed in their business and eliminated romance. Here, by all indications, was a man who combined brains with the willingness to use them for the furtherance of his suit. And this, together with the fact that she was a very human young woman, combined to make her hugely interested and delightfully curious.

This condition of mind was not diminished by other happenings which followed in rapid succession. She was paged in hotels and handed notes from the unknown; a taxicab drove up beside her car and from its window fluttered a missive, while the vehicle dashed away before she could even note its number; she found notes waiting for her at her dressmaker's, and once, at the dentist's, a telephone call from the unknown informed her that he needed her as badly as an unfilled tooth needs gold.

LLOYD HILTON had planned pretty thoroughly how he would proceed when the time came to disclose himself. He would have himself introduced again to Miss Marbeau, and thereupon, if she recognised his voice, or if she did not, he would explain to her the reasons for his novel campaign, beg her forgiveness, and ask if he might at least be numbered among her friends. After that—well, after that the matter would be in Fate's hands.

But he was not prepared when Miss Marbeau came swinging into his office one day, announced merely as "a lady—and a stunner too"—by the office-boy, and sat down at his desk and asked:

"Mr. Hilton, it must cost you a heap of money to send me all the notes and things you do. Of course, I've enjoyed them, but please, what's the reason?"

He was, in truth, so badly prepared that he merely looked amazed and crestfallen and uncomfortable, and stammered when he spoke.

Miss Marbeau, in the calm confidence that is always a woman's in such circumstances, did not wait for his explanations.

"I suppose," she said, "you wonder how I found out. I really believe you're entitled to that explanation, though of course you did a very daring thing in carrying out the plot. Well, first there was your voice. It was vaguely, very vaguely, familiar. So I knew it was somebody I had met or heard speak, at least. I tried to locate you among my friends and acquaintances, but I couldn't. Your handwriting didn't help, either, because I had never seen it before.

"I'd decided, however, that I would test out my powers of investigation and deduction. Your cablegram was the first clue. I thought perhaps the man who sent it might have cabled it to London and back again. To find out I went to the cable office as named on the blank and asked if the message was correct. I said it was in code and one of the words bothered me. The manager informed me that they had received no such message. None of the boys in the office remembered having delivered a message for anyone. It was faked."

"It was," agreed Hilton, smiling slightly.

"Now I knew, from something father had told me, that it isn't very easy to get a

receiving blank out of a cable office. I told some of the boys there that I had a dollar for anyone who could recall anything about any outsider who was around the office familiarly enough to have got away with a blank, and one of them remembered that some of the office-boys from the newspaper row were frequent visitors. One of them might have swiped a blank. That gave me the hint that the cable and wireless might have been the work of a newspaper man.

"It wasn't a strong clue, but that night I asked father what he would say was the profession of the man who wrote the address on one of the letters you sent me. I told him I was anxious to see how sure he was on handwriting. It happens to be his hobby.



"He was not prepared when Miss Marbeau came swinging into his office one day, announced merely as 'a lady—and a stunner too'—by the office-boy."

W W

"'He's a newspaper man,' said Father, 'you don't have to be an expert to see that. Nobody else writes in that special way, using a cross for a period and underlining the "u" in Marbeau.'"

"Gosh!" ejaculated Hilton, "that was awfully careless of me."

"So then," Miss Marbeau went on, "I tried to think of all the newspaper men I'd met, but there were a good many of them, and I still couldn't place your voice among them. I was sure I hadn't met you in any professional capacity."

"The plot thickens," observed Hilton.

"Then suddenly I remembered that I had met a man somewhere who spoke of being a Sunday editor. The rest was easy. I had my maid call up every Sunday editor in town—using my name, of course—and ask them some foolish question or other, while I sat and listened in at one of the extension phones. And when I heard your voice I had her stop calling. And there you are. Only——" Miss Marbeau had a reputation for directness. "Why? Mr. Hilton—what was the idea?"

"It began," said Hilton, "because Miss Morgan brought in that interview with you in which you said the modern man had not made any real improvement in love-making. You said that men had progressed by huge strides in every field of endeavour but the most important one of winning a woman, and you complained that he hadn't the ingenuity to use the conveniences of the age in that quest nor to invent means of making love in novel fashion. It was a good story—but I thought I'd show you. That's all."

"ALL!" exclaimed Miss Marbeau, with a warm twinkle in her eye. "ALL! Mr. Hilton, let me tell you that I have excellent grounds for a breach-of-promise suit against you, should I care to start it."

Hilton laughed. "Two things are necessary to make a breach-of-promise suit stand in court," he said. "One is the willingness of the girl to marry the man, the other is the unwillingness of the man to marry the girl. Your suit would fail for lack of both."

Miss Marbeau dropped her eyes before his and looked at the tip of her very fashionable shoes.

"I—I don't quite get you," she said.

"I mean," said Hilton, fumbling with some papers on his desk, "that you can't sue a man for breach of promise you're not willing to accept. Especially if he were more than eager to keep it."

Miss Marbeau looked up quickly and down again.

"It sounds fearfully complex," she said. "I think it would take me some time to understand it. You might"—she rose and adjusted her hat—"you might come up some time and explain it to me—Faintheart."

She was gone before he quite realised her words. Which was why he narrowly missed being cut in two by the elevator she had taken.

APRIL.

ONCE more the muddy lane reflects
A sky of egg-shell blue,
And somewhere in the gleaming woods
The cuckoo sings anew.

And once again soft primroses
Beneath the hedgerows lie,
Where furrowed fields of red-brown earth
Lie open to the sky.

So April comes with that strange spell
Which Chaucer used to know,
When he rode down these English lanes
Six hundred years ago.

AGNES HART.

THE MAN WHO LOVED DOGS

By EDWARD D. DICKINSON

ILLUSTRATED BY G. L. STAMPA

FOR many years a London Dog Show had not considered itself complete without the presence of Mr. James Marblewhite.

Everybody knew him and liked him, and those who knew him really well perhaps pitied him a little. He thought he knew such a lot about dogs, but, in reality, he knew so little. He loved them though, almost worshipped them in fact. As he once said himself, "If I was a judge, I would give every one of them a prize." It seemed wrong to him that a certain straightness of leg or set of shoulder should result in little coloured tickets and elated owners, when the dog next door, with a great soul shining through its eyes, was left with nothing at all.

The points of a dog meant little to Mr. Marblewhite. He was as incapable of judgment as a mother of judging her own children. He was too hopelessly biassed in favour of them all to pick out one from another.

Imagine a little man slightly inclined to corpulence. Fifty-five years old, and looking perhaps a little more than that. Peering amiably behind big spectacles, with the lower half of his face almost hidden by the straggling bush of an iron-grey moustache. In honour of the occasion wearing a rather seedy but aggressively patterned tweed suit, and a tweed deer-stalker hat with a little feather stuck jauntily in the band. Leaning on a big stick, with a catalogue he never looked at clasped in the other hand. Ready to talk "dog" with anybody; to tell any stranger why he, a lover of dogs, kept no dog himself.

"Only got rooms, you see," he would explain on the slightest provocation. In reality, it was one room that served him for a home.

"Only got rooms, and I think it's cruel to keep a dog in London if you haven't a big garden. If I had a dog I should never dare to let it run loose in the streets. I've seen dogs run over—three times altogether. I can assure you I was haunted for days. When I think of the careless way some people let their dogs run in London, it makes my blood boil."

It seemed funny to hear this meekest of little men talking so fiercely, but he said nothing more than the truth. On one occasion he had found himself in the dock because of that boiling blood of his, with a fine of thirty shillings to squeeze out of his meagre salary.

It was the first time he had seen a dog run over. The animal was not his. The motorist in question had done his best to avoid the tragedy; had stopped at once and returned to proclaim his innocence and distress to the owner; but there was a dog, a tangled, reddened heap of hair and bones in the gutter, and Mr. Marblewhite, seeing red, had smote the motorist on the head with his umbrella and knocked his hat off. It was a very painful situation, and the little man shivered yet when he thought of it—but all the same, he was glad.

The pity of it was that there really seemed no chance that he would ever keep a dog at all. He was "something in the City," and something very unimportant. His income averaged a shade over two hundred and twenty pounds a year. "Not much chance of a large garden on that," said the numerous acquaintances and strangers to whom Mr. Marblewhite would relate his troubles, and the little man was forced to shake his head sadly and agree with them.

Then his only living sister met with a remarkable stroke of good fortune.



" He heard her before he saw her, and his heart sank. Her loud voice was raised in altercation with a porter."

He was sitting at breakfast in his boarding-house, toying distastefully with an egg that was as under-done as it was over-ripe, when he received a letter from her. This was in itself an event. He had not seen her for ten years, and during that time they had done no more than exchange perfunctory greetings at Christmas.

So far as he knew, they had little enough in common. She had successfully bullied him in childhood, holding as she did an advantage of two years in age, and nearer three stones in weight, and he had feared and disliked her intensely. For a long while her movements had ceased to interest him, but he had an idea that she was acting as housekeeper to a wealthy and widowed publican. He had always felt vaguely sorry for the publican.

Her letter told him two things of vital interest to himself. First, that her employer had died, leaving her nearly two thousand pounds a year—secondly, that she proposed he should retire from business and make his home with her.

He sat over his breakfast a long time, holding the letter in his hand. Then, instead of attending his office, he took a bus to the park, and read it all over again.

The result of his reflections he expressed out loud in two sentences :

" If she's made up her mind, it's no good my saying anything "—and

" I shall be able to keep a dog."

That morning he handed in his notice, and next day he bought himself a new tweed suit . . .

Two weeks later he met her at Waterloo.

In a series of letters she had apprised him of the fact that she had bought a house, introduced herself to the Vicar, and was toying with the idea of taking up hunting. She was now coming up to Town to buy furniture and clothes, and, incidentally, to collect her brother.

He heard her before he saw her, and his heart sank. Her loud voice was raised in altercation with a porter. He muttered to himself, " I shall be able to keep a dog," to keep his spirits up, and went to meet her. In one glance he realised that she had changed very little. She was smarter, much smarter —fatter, and redder in face ; but otherwise much the same.

When she saw him, she left the porter and embraced the little man with so much warmth that she nearly broke his spectacles on the unyielding curve of her hard high bosom.

From the moment of their meeting she took complete charge. Ordered him about and dragged him here and there. Her energy was devastating, and she communicated it to others. In a week she was whirling back to her new home in the country in the company of her stupefied brother and an alarming quantity of luggage, and it seemed to him that he had not yet found time to say anything about a dog.

Tactfully, and although he was aching all over with anticipatory joys, he said nothing until the first turmoil of settling down was over. Then he remarked tentatively one day at lunch :

" I met young Mr. Garfield this morning. Had a long chat with him."

This was quite a good opening, and he

felt elated at his cunning. He knew very well that if he had said openly, "I want a dog," his sister would have vetoed the suggestion immediately and on principle. Now she was interested. She wanted to be intimate with the Garfields.

"Oh," she said. "What did you talk about, James?"

"Dogs," he said. "He found that I was interested. He breeds Airedales. He has a litter of pups, and he wants me to come up to the house and look them over for him."

He was dying to make the suggestion that he should purchase one of the pups, but he was wise enough to let the idea emanate from her. Presently she rose to the bait.

"I think it would be rather nice if you bought one from him," she said. He applauded her warmly for the thought and made a reality of his dreams that very afternoon.

For a few days he was in a seventh heaven of bliss, then black tragedy overtook him.

He was so incapable of treating that puppy in what his sister considered a reasonable manner. To him it was something almost divine, and he would play with it and worship it for hours. At the end of a romp the pair of them—the orderly little man and the very young little dog—would sit opposite each other exhausted and panting, with their heads on one side, and the most foolish and understanding of grins illuminating their faces.

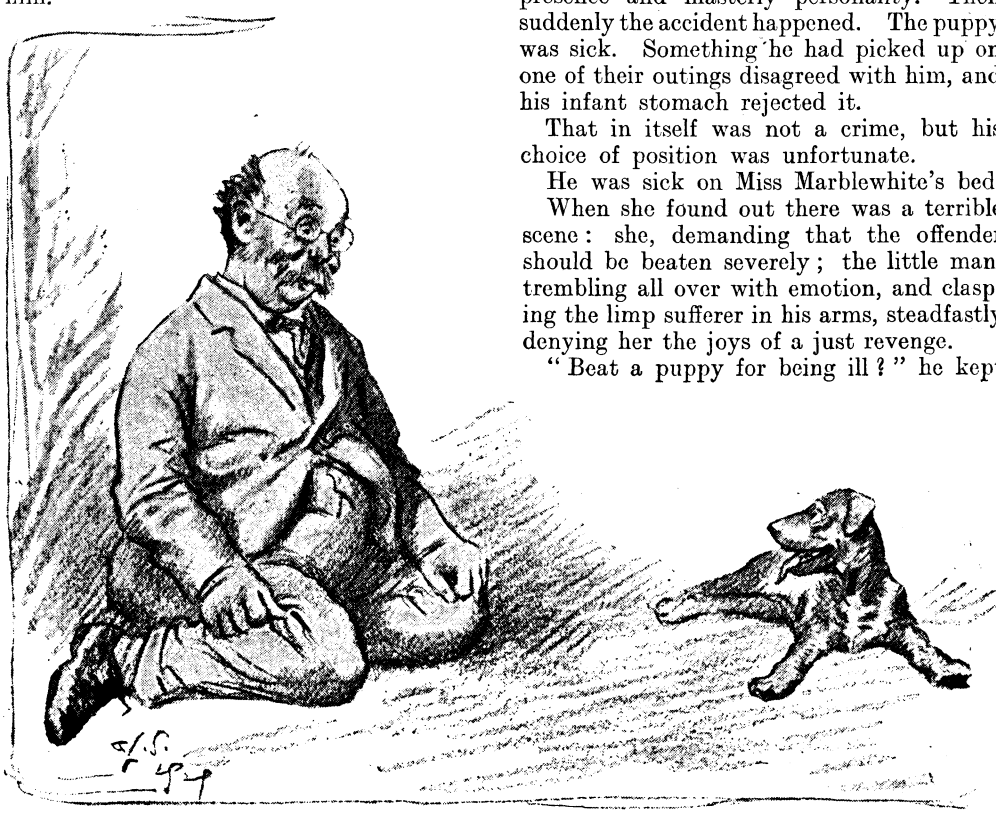
They certainly had some good times together. They went ratting in the barns and rabbiting in the hedges. They were out from morning until night, and somehow they always managed to get their feet muddy. The new carpets suffered; the new sofa suffered. Jane Marblewhite objected strenuously, and her brother promised on behalf of both sinners that ways would be mended in the future. Alas! the promises were broken, not once but many times. The little man, with such an ally at his elbow, was getting out of hand; almost ceasing to be afraid of his sister's overwhelming presence and masterly personality. Then suddenly the accident happened. The puppy was sick. Something he had picked up on one of their outings disagreed with him, and his infant stomach rejected it.

That in itself was not a crime, but his choice of position was unfortunate.

He was sick on Miss Marblewhite's bed.

When she found out there was a terrible scene: she, demanding that the offender should be beaten severely; the little man, trembling all over with emotion, and clasping the limp sufferer in his arms, steadfastly denying her the joys of a just revenge.

"Beat a puppy for being ill?" he kept



"The pair of them would sit opposite each other exhausted and panting, the most foolish and understanding of grins illuminating their faces."

on saying. "It would be a disgraceful cruelty. How would you like to be thrashed with a stick every time you had a bilious attack?"

The battle lasted a long time, and then Jane Marblewhite, purple in the face with fury, delivered her ultimatum:

"I won't keep the dirty little beast in the house another day," she cried. "You can take him back where he came from this very afternoon."

Mr. Marblewhite spent over an hour trying to convince himself that he would meet the ultimatum with another of equal determination. That if the puppy went, he would go too—but his nerve was not equal to the task. If she took him at his word, he would be penniless—without a job, and with very little chance of finding one. He could not face the prospect.

The puppy went back, and for nearly a year the house was without a dog. During that time Miss Marblewhite established herself. She was disliked and feared, but she enjoyed creating both sensations, and she saw to it that she was not ignored.

With relentless energy she pushed herself to the front of every undertaking. No committee meeting of any kind was complete unless a chair groaned under the shapely weight of this tremendous woman. She was supremely happy, but Mr. Marblewhite was not. True, she did not interfere with his actions to any extent. He had every chance of attending dog shows, and he indulged his passion to the limit, but he lived on his memories—the memory of a few short days and a fat puppy.

Besides, he had a feeling now that his numerous doggy acquaintances were laughing at him. No longer could he plead poverty, or lack of garden, as his excuses. He lived in the country now; he had money in his pocket to spend; but still he kept no dog.

Sometimes people would pretend that his love for the animals was itself a pretence, and then he would protest passionately against such an assertion.

Sometimes he would say that he was looking round for a likely breed—sometimes he would hint of an outbreak of rabies in the neighbourhood, and of strict police regulations that temporarily forbade his making a purchase, but although he never actually confessed to the truth, it yet managed to leak out, and was treated as a joke, or a subject of pity, according to the nature of the hearers.

Then a miracle happened, and he was suddenly happy again.

There were three stages to the miracle, and the first of these brought disgrace on the head of Mr. Marblewhite.

One evening he forgot to connect the burglar alarm. As his sister pointed out to him many times the next day, they might have all been murdered in their sleep without being a pennypiece the wiser.

This fear of night raiders was a peculiar kink in her character, for, despite her aggressive courage during the day, she was as nervous as a cat in the dark. It was as though she fell to pieces mentally as well as physically when she exchanged her clothing for the unconfining drapery of a nightgown.

She had insisted on the burglar alarm before she would take up her residence in the house, and the nightly setting of it was the most important of her brother's household duties.

It was just like him, of course, to forget it. All next day he was in disgrace, and it was as a peace-offering that he went to her rescue that evening with an umbrella when he realised that she was caught at the Vicarage without one.

Had Miss Marblewhite been walking by herself she would never have noticed anything peculiar about the draggled boy that they passed towing a miserable dog at the end of a string. Her brother gave the pair one glance and instantly realised two things—first, that the boy had a large brick in his left hand; and secondly, that he was making for the river.

Mr. Marblewhite handed the umbrella to his sister without a word, and in three strides was in front of the boy, barring his passage; a damp but indomitable figure.

"What are you going to do with that dog?" he demanded, glaring fiercely through his big spectacles.

"Drown it," said the boy with a grin.

"Whose dog is it?"

"Mine."

"I'll give you half-a-crown for it."

"Where's your money?" asked the boy suspiciously.

Mr. Marblewhite fumbled in his pockets; produced the necessary coin, and held it out aggressively.

"Here it is," he snapped, "and if you don't let me have the dog for that, I'll set the police on you for cruelty to animals."

"Drowning ain't cruel," grumbled the

boy. "There's dozens of things I might have done." But he took the proffered coin and pocketed it quickly.

The dog sat back on its haunches and looked at him, shivering a little.

"Poor fellow," he said, and patted the



"'Where's your money?' asked the boy suspiciously."

"There he is," he said, and handed Mr. Marblewhite the muddy bit of string.

sodden animal on the head. A pink tongue curled out and caressed his hand. When he looked up the boy had gone, and his

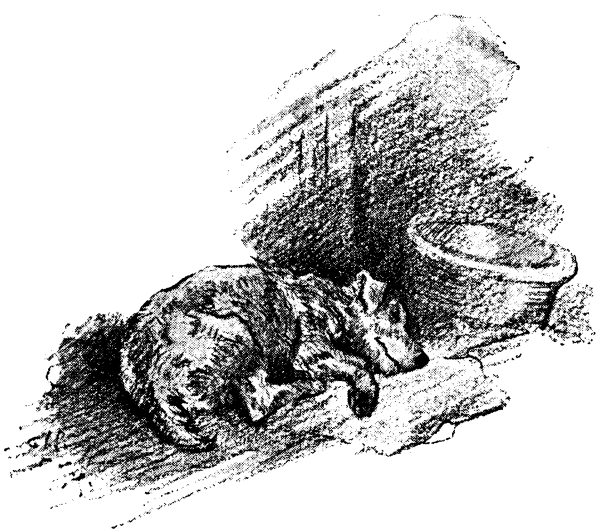
sister was standing by his side. He had forgotten all about her, and his heart sank suddenly.

"I couldn't let that beastly boy drown it," he said.

"I'm not going to have it in the house," said Miss Marblewhite gruffly, and added, "You're getting very wet." Although she did not care for dogs she did not want any harm to come to them, and, for once, in her heart, she almost approved of her brother's precipitate action.

He seemed to sense that inward agreement, and in a moment was speaking very rapidly.

"I'll have a kennel built for him. I swear I won't let him come into the house. He won't worry you a bit."



"Curled himself up on his bed of sacking and blinked perfect contentment at the world."

"You're not to be trusted with dogs," said Miss Marblewhite.

The little man nearly wept in his eagerness.

"I am, Jane. I've learned my lesson. I promise he won't make a mess in the house."

"He won't twice," said his sister grimly. "I can promise you that much."

She looked down at the dog judicially. "It's very ugly, and a mongrel."

"He won't look so bad when he's dry," said Mr. Marblewhite.

"Well, put it in the outhouse for to-night," said his sister grudgingly. "And we'll talk it over again to-morrow."

The strangely assorted trio splashed home together, and, within a measurable space of time, the smallest and newest member of the family, with his skin cracking around a vast helping of hot stew, curled himself up on his bed of sacking and blinked perfect contentment at the world.

The next day Mr. Marblewhite christened him "Ben," for some reason best known to himself, and washed him. The results were not distinctly encouraging. Miss Marblewhite, called to pass judgment on the now spotless animal, expressed it rather well.

"If he wasn't brown and fluffy, he might be a kind of large fox-terrier," she said, and Ben wagged his tail and grinned at her.

It was the man who took offence. "It may be a mongrel," he said, "but it is the most intelligent dog I've ever seen."

In that at least he was right. The dog simply quivered with intelligence, and, what is more, behaved like a perfect gentleman. It made no attempt to run away when Mr. Marblewhite, in fear and trembling, first untied its lead—rather it appeared to understand perfectly that a change of masters had been effected, and to be entirely satisfied with its new surroundings.

For some days Miss Marblewhite eyed it constantly with suspicion, and wasted much of her time closing doors after her brother, in case her sacred carpets should again be soiled, but the dog made no attempt whatever to enter the house. Its behaviour was perfection. It never jumped up, never chased cats; kept soberly to heel when walking, and answered the growls and rumbles of other dogs with nothing more quarrelsome than a kind of superior sniff.

On one occasion an encounter was literally forced on it, and then it fought with a cool and scientific ferocity that ended the battle almost before it began.

Mr. Marblewhite was in ecstasies, and even the woman ended by giving grudging praise. Ben was certainly established, but it needed just one thing more to bring their admiration to boiling point.

One night they were visited by a burglar. Mr. Marblewhite was aroused from his slumbers by a crash from the room below, followed by a series of agonised yells, and a perfect machine-gun fire of barks. In a

moment the house was in an uproar. High above the clamour downstairs the piercing shrieks of Miss Marblewhite dominated the feebler but equally willing efforts of the two maidservants.

perado downstairs were armed with a revolver. At last, with one weapon in each hand, he cautiously made his way to the scene of conflict and poked his head round the drawing-room door.



"First went the burglar, stumbling and moaning at every step; then came Ben, eyeing the untorn trouser leg greedily, and finally Mr. Marblewhite himself."

"Murder!" shrieked Miss Marblewhite. "Fire! Thieves! Murder!"

Her brother took his time about descending, hovering between a gun which he was afraid to fire and a poker which he realised was a very inadequate weapon if the des-

After his first hurried peep he knew there was nothing to fear, and entered with quite a show of boldness. Ben was entirely master of the situation. He had the intruder in a corner, and was scientifically making a mess of him, leaping in

and out continually, and barking all the time.

The man saw Mr. Marblewhite and cried at once :

" Call off your dog. He's killing me."

" Ben," said Mr. Marblewhite mildly, " come off."

The dog came to him immediately, and sat down, awaiting orders. His master put his foot on an ugly-looking jemmy that was lying on the ground, and pointed the gun vaguely in the direction of the burglar.

" If you move," he threatened, " I'll shoot."

The man put his hands above his head, and whimpered :

" No, Mister. I won't move ; I'm all in bits."

He was indeed in a pretty bad way. Both his hands were torn, and there was a long scratch on one cheek that bled profusely. A large piece was torn right out of one of his trouser legs, and a thin trickle of blood that welled from the gap proclaimed that the dog had been quite impartial in its attacks.

Mr. Marblewhite thought rapidly and decided what to do. He shouted upstairs for one of the maids to bring down his dressing-gown and an electric torch, and then, having relinquished his poker, turned once more to his prisoner.

" You'll have to walk to the police-station," he said. " And if you try to run away I'll set the dog on you again."

It was a warm night, and the little man enjoyed himself, realising that he was taking part in quite an imposing procession.

First went the burglar, stumbling and moaning at every step ; then came Ben, eyeing the untorn trouser leg greedily, and finally Mr. Marblewhite himself, with the gun and the electric torch, conscious of the three admiring female heads that clustered at the window to watch things.

THE next morning Miss Marblewhite, still suffering from shock, took her breakfast in bed, and in due course her brother came up to see her. He was bursting with excitement and began to pour out a torrent of words.

" I couldn't imagine how Ben managed to get into the house in the nick of time. You know he was shut up in the shed, but when I went to look the door was open. I knew I had closed it properly, so I thought I'd try a little experiment. I shut him up in the shed again, called him, and then ran to the window to look."

His voice rose to a shrill squeak of triumph.

" Do you know what that dog did ? He stood on his hind legs by the door, and pushed up the latch with his nose. And some fools actually say that dogs can't think ! "

Miss Marblewhite seemed dimly to remember that she herself might have made some such remark in the past, but she realised that this was not the time to mention it. Instead she asked a question.

" But how did that awful man get in ? Did you forget the alarm again ? "

" No," said her brother with pardonable glee. " It was cut. If it hadn't been for Ben's intelligence and courage the house would have been ransacked."

" All our new plate," whispered Miss Marblewhite, " and if he had come upstairs he might have murdered me for my jewellery."

The little man nodded with a judicial air.

" I'm afraid he might," he said, " terrible as the thought is. He was certainly a desperate blackguard ; and his language on the way to the police-station was appalling."

For a moment there was silence between them, then the woman made what was, after all, the only reasonable suggestion.

" Perhaps," she suggested, " Ben might sleep in the house in future. I'm sure I should be a lot easier in my mind."

Mr. Marblewhite was sufficient of a tactician to hide his elation.

" A very good idea, Jane," he said. " He can have a basket in the hall."

When he was in the seclusion of his own room he did a little dance that he had invented on the spur of the moment. It seemed to him the only possible way of expressing his feelings.

In the days that followed they discussed at great length their plans for the prevention of such a terrifying incident, and decided that it was not worth spending good money on the repair of their " alarm." Mr. Marblewhite, for the first time in his life, had a say in things.

" It has shown how undependable it is," he explained. " And with Ben in the house, we know we are safe."

" Ben might be poisoned," objected his sister, and the little man shivered at the very thought.

" That's true," he agreed. " But with an animal of such exceptional intelligence we can easily remedy the matter. I will train him to take food only from . . ."—he was about to say " myself," but changed it tactfully into " you and me."

When, a week later, the dog refused to

touch succulent bones presented to him in turn by the two maids, the jobbing gardener, and the curate, the master's cup of joy was full.

"You see," he said proudly, as Ben first accepted a bone from himself and then from his sister, and everyone agreed that they saw indeed, and were correspondingly impressed.

It is not too much to say that Mr. Marblewhite made himself a bit of a nuisance about his dog. He talked about nothing else, and repeated his stories so often that perhaps it came as a relief to some when disaster fell upon him.

He and his sister had been out for the afternoon, and one of the maids was spending the day with a sick aunt. The house had been left in charge of the other maid and, of course, Ben.

Mr. and Miss Marblewhite strolled up the drive together, all unconscious of impending evil. Even when they entered the hall there were no suspicious circumstances to warn them, but when they went into the sitting-room they both stopped, appalled, at the scene of chaos before them.

All the silver was gone; flower-vases, photo-frames, everything. The desk was broken open and ransacked; papers and documents were strewn over the floor.

"Rose!" cried Miss Marblewhite, and "Ben!" cried her brother.

There was no answer, and they stared at each other in bewilderment.

The woman was the first to act. It was still daytime, and she was prepared for anything.

"We must search the house," she cried, and seized the poker. Her brother took the tongs, and together they made their way from room to room, finding in each the same disorder, the same sad evidence of systematic robbery.

At last only the maid's bedroom remained to be searched, and here they found the unfortunate Rose, securely gagged and bound, and very nearly dead with terror.

It was a long time after they had released her before they could get any coherent account of what had happened, and even when she had told all she knew, it amounted to very little. She had been in her bedroom, it seemed, and had been startled by the sudden opening of the door behind her, but before she had time to turn round, a hand was thrust over her mouth, she was forced down into a chair, and tied up so tightly that she couldn't move an inch. . . .

"And you never saw him?" demanded Miss Marblewhite.

"No, Mum," sobbed Rose.

"But where was Ben?" stammered Mr. Marblewhite, who felt that the world was breaking up beneath his feet.



"When he was in the seclusion of his own room he did a little dance that he had invented on the spur of the moment."

"He'd gone, sir," wailed Rose. "A quarter of an hour before it happened, I looked for him all places, and called him, but he'd gone."

It was then that the wrath of Miss Marblewhite descended on the head of her trembling brother. She conveniently forgot her own enthusiasm for the vanished animal.

"There," she cried, purple and shaking with rage. "You see now what comes of trusting your house to a dog. The beastly,

treacherous thing. If it hadn't been for you and your ridiculous ideas I should have had a new burglar alarm put in, and then this would never have happened. Now we've lost everything; all my beautiful new things gone . . . That's just like a dog. Pretending to be so clever, and then leaving the house just when he was wanted. I warn you, James, if that horrible creature comes back, I'll have him shot or poisoned . . ."

But Mr. Marblewhite had also gone. Staggering blindly downstairs, and out into the garden; a miserable, shaking torment of conflicting emotions. Of anger against his sister and disappointment in his dog. How could Ben have deserted his post when he had been definitely left in charge? It was unbelievable, but yet it had happened. He prayed that the dog would never come back.

And Ben never did come back. The police came and went; asked many questions, but achieved nothing.

The Insurance Company made good most of the damage in cash, but nothing could make good the damage to Mr. Marblewhite's pride and trust. He crawled about the house in a state of permanent disgrace, with his very moustache drooping sadly and his back bent like a bow.

Then one morning at breakfast he received a letter. A dirty envelope, with a scrawled address. Some instinct told him not to open it in front of his sister, and he slipped it into his pocket to be read in private.

After the meal was over, he retired to his own room and produced the letter.

It was long, rambling, and very badly written, but as he scanned the well-thumbed pages, the effect on him was magical. Slowly his back straightened, and the dull depression in his eyes gave way to a dancing triumph.

His hands were shaking with excitement as he turned back the pages to enjoy the flavour of them once more.

"DEAR SIR" (he read)—

"I am a fool to write this perhaps. It gives clues that the police would like to get hold of. I mean the post-mark and the finger-prints I see I've made already, but I expect I'm safe all right with you. I don't want you to think badly about Rags. You called him Ben, but Rags is his real name. I've known you a long time, and talked to you often at Dog Shows. I think dogs are fine. You've told me a lot about yourself and how you liked dogs, and when I heard you say how your sister was rich now, I did a bit of thinking.

"Rags is a bit of all right. He's a winner, he is. I knew you'd fall for him, once you had him. That kid who said he was going to drown Rags was my nipper. He was pretty smart too, and took you in a treat.

"I knew once Rags was in charge you'd pretty soon leave the house to him, but I made sure by having him chew up Bill Tuckle. Bill had done me a dirty trick, so I tipped him the wink that your house was easy, and Rags chewed him as I knew he would. He made a proper mess of Bill.

"Then I just waited until you and the old woman had gone out, and it was easy.

"I'm not sorry I pinched your stuff. Business is business, and a man's got to live, but I didn't want you to feel bad about Rags. You see, I'm that way about dogs myself, and I know how bad you must have felt. You can't blame Rags, because he was my dog and not yours. You treated him well while you had him, and for that I'd like to shake your hand, but circumstances are against us.

"Now I must close, with all good wishes."

The letter was unsigned, but there was a postscript.

"P.S. You can't blame Rags, can you?"

Mr. Marblewhite stood for a moment very still, with the soiled pages clasped very tightly in his fingers. Clues! Of course there were clues, just as the man had said, but the police would never see them. He was a criminal, doubtless, but the fellow knew he was safe in writing. His manhood had been given back to him, and his faith in the world, because only Man was vile after all, and dogs were wonderful, paragons of virtue and faith and obedience; and Ben, as he would always think of him, the most marvellous of the whole race.

He would never keep a dog again himself, but that did not seem to matter now. He had his memories. He and this unknown man and Ben were in a conspiracy together; an unlawful conspiracy of silence. They were malefactors, and if Society knew, Society would doubtless condemn him. He did not care. He would live his own little life, and cherish his great secret, and be grateful for his re-created happiness. . . .

Carefully he tore the paper into small fragments. Then, setting a light to them, he sat back on his heels until he was sure that all was consumed.

Then he rose and shook himself, and presently was trotting downstairs with his hands in his pockets and a long-forgotten music-hall tune on his lips.

In the hall he met his sister, who looked at him in surprise.

"It's a treat to see you looking a bit more cheerful," she said. "What's happened?"

He gave her a rather sheepish grin and shrugged his shoulders, mentally hugging his great secret to him.

"No good moping," he answered her, and passed out into the solitude of the sunny garden.



Just around the Corner

By Andrew Soutar

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

HERE is a story of endeavour. Some may say that it was without reward, but that depends on how you differentiate between material and moral reward.

I wish that you had known young Davidson, or that I could give you some faithful picture of him. Too often the pen is a futile instrument. But try to think of what you would have had your own son of twenty-two to be: think of a young Viking, blonde, bold, tremulous under the spur of adventure and moved by a deep and never-failing affection for his father.

At college, he led the pack in the Rugger field; he could swim with the power and determination of Leander; he could box with all the vigour of your old-time prize-fighter. But, always the gentleman! Always ready to shoulder the burden of someone else. His father loved him even as his mother had loved him during her lifetime. He had no conception of the meaning of conceit, although his line could be traced back in Border history to the early days of the feudal tribes. Truthfully, it might have been said of him that he was misunderstood by everyone save his uncle, Angus Davidson, who in his early youth came south from Ayrshire and matched his wits against the Sassenach financiers. Very shrewd and calculating was Uncle Angus: he had a great deal of wealth, but he had something else—the sense to keep it. Not even when his brother, the father of Malcolm Davidson, was hard-pressed against the wall, did he offer succour; his attitude was that of the third party who says: "You have got into this corner because of your own folly; therefore, you must fight your own way out." He said of young Malcolm: "Here is a fine throw-back, but muscle and brawn, without brains, are no more than encumbrances."

Why young Malcolm went into the north-west of Canada to look for a mythical fortune may be explained in a very few words. His father had bought the Muirbank Estate soon after the death of his wife. He believed in it; he invested every farthing of his capital in the development of it, but he lacked exactly what his son, Malcolm, lacked—brains, the financier's brains, the brains of the shrewd man who can buy and sell at the opportune moment. His was a very beautiful life, if one pays tribute to paternal affection, to straightforwardness in dealing. From the day that young Malcolm was able to walk by his side over the estate, holding to his hand, talking to him in his baby language of the flowers of the field, and so forth, there had been between them a bond of love that belongs to the ethereal. He wanted to do so much for the boy; the boy wanted to do so much for his father. Alas, a father can-

not do much for a son by merely dreaming of what he would like to do. Nor can a son lift his father out of poverty by merely wishing that he could do something great for him.

Troublous times came; there were debts to be paid, improvements to be made, expenditure to be incurred. And old Davidson knew what it was to go to bed at night fraught with forebodings, dazed by the fear of what the morrow might bring.

And then, one day, young Malcolm realised of a sudden that this fine old granite rock he had imagined his father to be was shaking under the tempest of creditors' threats. With precocity that touched the beautiful, he compelled his father to sit opposite to him in the old oak-panelled study, and he said to him:

"Dad, we're not playing fair with one another. Ever since I was a kid I've taken everything from you that you had to give. I don't seem to have done anything in return. I don't say that you have deliberately led me to believe that the estate was a gold mine, but you have always managed to convey the impression that I had nothing to worry about. It isn't so."

Old Davidson looked at the stalwart steadily for a few moments before he spoke.

"I know," he said, at last. "My affection for you has probably overriden my judgment. Always I have wanted to give you the idea that you had nothing to worry about, that I had made everything secure so that you would be safe."

"But that isn't fair to me," said young Malcolm. "I'm a man. Why should I expect to drowse in a bed of roses of your making? Now, look here, Dad! During the last month I ve tried to put you out of my mind: I've tried to assume that you were just a very good friend who might be called on at any moment to ask me to clear out of it and make my own way in the world. Professionally, I don't know much—Uncle Angus would say that I am little more than a fool in matters of finance. You and I have never got on very well with him, but it is only recently that I've discovered that why I didn't like him was because he was always too practical. You know, Dad? No romance in his soul. No dignity, shall I say, and no appreciation of the traditions of the family. But, hang it all, he's right! No fellow has any claim on his ancestors. He has been given his life and he ought to make the best of it. I find that this Muirbank Estate is in a sick and sorry condition. The four farms which it embraces are not making three per cent: tons of money could be spent on re-fencing them; the drainage is all wrong; the ground has been put back to grass when it should have been fed and made arable. Before the end of two years you will have so many demands made on you that you won't know where to look for the money. In fact, the whole of your capital, to-day, is——"

It was there that old Davidson stopped him and a beatific smile lit up his eyes as he finished the sentence:

"The whole of my capital, boy, is in you and in the great love I bear you and the love you bear me. What would life be to me without you?"

"That's very fine of you, Dad," said young Malcolm, "and you know that I reciprocate the sentiment, but, as Uncle would say, it isn't practical. We've got to make money somehow and I'm satisfied that I'm the fellow to make it. I'm going west—far west—right across Canada."

"Leaving me?" asked the old man.

"Only for a while," said the boy. "You shall stay here and look after Muirbank. Every bill that falls due I want you to send out to me and I will pay it."

"It will take some capital to get you out there, boy, no matter what you intend to do when you get there."

"I've arranged all that," said Malcolm. "I sold the two polo ponies yesterday without telling you about it."

The two ponies had been his joy for three years. What it had cost him to sell them the old man could only guess, but he accepted the sacrifice with no other sign than the arching of his eyebrows.

"That will take me to Canada," said Malcolm, "and give me a start when I get there."

"Canada," said the old man, "is a big place, and the remarkable thing about it is that no one stands at the street corner of any of its towns to give away a fortune to a youngster from the Old Country. What are you going to do?"

"Now, laugh at me," said the boy. "Tell me that I'm a romantic fool, if you will. Tell me that the days of adventure are over. I shall still go on with my project. There's a big gold-rush to Alaska: it may not be so appealing as the Klondike affair of years ago; it may be one of these land booms that are so common out yonder, but I feel like taking my chance."

"And leaving me here," said the old man, and his voice was very distant. "Do you think it will be easy for me to carry on here while you are away?"

"It won't be for long," said Malcolm. "I have a feeling that we have only to use our brains in this matter and we are on the right track. Brains are everything in this life." He laughed at some recollection. "Uncle Angus can be a cantankerous old thing when he likes, but there's a lot of sound logic in what he says."

"Did he give you the idea of going away from me?"

"No," said the boy; "all he said to me was that he thought it was about time I got on to somebody's pay-sheet, and added, rather contemptuously, I thought, that nothing hurt him so much in life as to see a young fellow walking about without the gumption to pick up what was lying at his feet. I could see what he meant. He guessed that I was dreaming too much; he thought it was time that I applied myself



"Old Davidson knew what it was to go to bed at night fraught with forebodings, dazed by the fear of what the morrow might bring."

to real hard work and contributed a little to the family exchequer. That's the trouble with the majority of youngsters: they are stewards but they don't know their job. I shall go out yonder without expecting an avalanche of luck: I shall feel that I am just looking for a job."

"Don't you think you could find something nearer home, my boy?" said the old man, and yet the next moment he held up his hand and said: "No, I don't mean that. I have no right to keep you here when your heart is urging you to go out and make a man of yourself. I know that nothing would give you greater joy than to be able to say to me, to-morrow or the next day, that you were able to take a load from my shoulders. Look here, I shall put no obstacle in your way: don't think about my feelings. Go ahead; do what you believe to be right. And I will wait here and trust that you will win."

And now, take that as the beginning of the romance, and it sounds very melodramatic, full of mock heroics, pregnant with boastfulness. Yet, it wasn't.

MALCOLM, the young Viking, went out to Canada. No sooner had the ship berthed in the harbour of Nova Scotia than the purser handed him a cablegram. A creditor had leaped in and old Davidson was distraught. It was only a matter of seventy-five pounds, but he couldn't put his hand even on that small amount at that identical moment. What was he to do?

Young Malcolm cabled back that he might sell immediately the stud of wire-haired terriers that he loved so dearly. He headed westward. For two months he toiled on a ranch; hard work, grilling work, for which there was little reward. And more letters came to him from his old father: it was essential that the drainage of Barrow Farm on the estate should be overhauled, since the farmer holding the tenancy had lost thirty head of cattle through their drinking polluted water. That letter came in the week when young Malcolm, by a stroke of luck and a twist in a simple and quite honourable deal in real estate, had made two hundred and fifty pounds. He sent the whole of that sum to his father with a brief note that was the biggest lie he had ever told: he said that he was rapidly making a fortune that would place him and his father far beyond the reach of want.

Young Malcolm might have touched the fringe of glory about this time if he had been selfish. The daughter of the rancher for whom he was working was a handsome girl with a fine throw of shoulder and a spirit that was absolutely indomitable. She admired the young Viking intensely, and he did more than admire her. There was that in her carriage that appealed to his sense of the exquisitely beautiful; her courage was akin to his own. No word of love had passed between them, but often he had said to himself that given a woman such as she to ride by his side through life, he would conquer any difficulty that might arise.

Her father died about this time and she had looked at Malcolm as a woman might look for something deeper than sympathy. And it came over him that he was poor in material things and that he still owed a great and an unending duty to his father. He left the ranch and headed farther westward. But before he went he said to her that one day they might be brought again together, when, all things being equal, he could tell her all that he felt towards her. And all that she said was: "I shall wait."

More long months of labour, of chequered fortune, of slips that might have meant the ending of all the travail, of chances that came like flashes in a dream and were gone. He was liked by all those with whom he came in contact: it seemed to him that everybody in the world was intent on helping him, if only he could rightly help himself.

But there was something missing in him: he reproached himself for it. "I know," he would say to himself in the silence of hut or prairie, "I have the lucky face but I haven't the lucky brain. Sometimes I feel as though I would always be going on looking for fortune. It seems to be just around the corner when all the time it is at my feet and I haven't the brains to understand."

Once, he discussed this aspect of his life with an old miner who trekked with him into the wilderness of the west. The Big Snow had come and they were still a hundred miles and more from their objective. Their supplies of food were woefully reduced; they had seen hundreds of men and women struggling past them and onward, lured by the call that never fails to appeal. They had seen men and women broken in health, feeble in desire, struggling backward to their base, hopelessness stamped on their impoverished features.

Reduced supplies of food, little hope of carrying on unless some material aid were

obtained! But the courage of the old-timer stimulated the flagging spirit of the youngster.

"I'm nigh on seventy," said the old-timer, "but I still believe there's a chance for me yet. Why should you doubt if I can still believe? I'm goin' to make Red Fork if there's an ounce of strength in this old body to get me through, and when I come out of it, boy—oh, boy, when I come out of it! Look for me on Broadway, in Fifth Avenue, anywheres if there's money burning. I'm goin' to paint li'l' ol' New York so red you will see it flaming against the sky twenty miles before you hit the mouth of the Hudson River on the steamer. It's brains you want, boy. When we get up there to Red Fork I'll larn yer how to make use of other men's brains and pick up the 'stuff' that's lyin' at yer feet. Don't yer get it into yer head that you're the unlucky one in life. Many's the man I've met who would whine out his heart sayin' that even God was agin 'im when all that was wrong with 'im was that he couldn't use his grey matter. Now, I don't say that a little more capital wouldn't do us both a lot of good; but we ain't got it, so what's the good of wishing? If I could go out and buy a couple of good dog teams, like as not we'd be comin' back here in six months' time fat, bloated millionaires; but we ain't got it, so, as I say, why waste yer time in wishin'?"

At this time young Malcolm had a little capital and he had also assimilated the wisdom of his Uncle Angus. He knew that they must hold tightly to it. He had set foot on the road towards a great project and he knew that he must stifle at least a little of the affection he held for his father. His heart might yearn to perform miracles that would give that father peace of mind, comfort and plenty in his old age, but if he were to achieve the success he desired he must expect of his father a little self-sacrifice.

How it came through he was never able to understand, but he picked up a letter at the last settlement before he and his acquaintance, the old-timer, plunged into the white of the North. The father's letter was bravely phrased, but, to the boy Malcolm, the space between the lines teemed with eloquence. He couldn't go on. Debts had accumulated so that the Muirbank Estate was like a perforated mole-hill; the whole fabric was tottering. It seemed to the boy that the whole of the legal profession in England had conspired to formulate claims for this and that; there were rights of way disputes, farmhouses were crumbling, rates had soared to terrible pinnacles. The family solicitors had gathered round and done their best to reassure old Davidson. They had suggested a sale here and a sale there, a shortening of the estate boundaries, a saving here that might bring in a few hundreds, economising there that might save him a little more.

"Much as I love this place," he wrote, "hard though I have fought to keep it for you, I feel that I cannot and will not ask you to contribute another penny to the upholding of what we, both of us, might consider the traditions of the family. You have been so splendid in your resolve to do all you can to lift me above the reproach of my more wealthy neighbours, but I realise, in taking these moneys from you, that I have done no more than feed my own vanity and conceit. I have wanted to shine in your eyes, to deserve your good opinion of me, to compel your admiration. That's all wrong: one shouldn't try to buy affection.

"Frankly, my boy, I should be happier than I am now if I were by your side, striving, old man though I am, to rebuild the fallen fortunes of the house. I would like to share the hardships you must be suffering, but it cannot be done. You are to me the reflection of all that I hoped to be when I was young. I feel certain that you will agree with what I wish to do this week.

"There have been so many claims on the estate of late that I don't know how to face the future. I feel that I want to take tradition, pride and everything else and fling them into the flames and say, No. I will fight all that is opposed to me, and if I lose I lose; if I win I win. Listen, boy, a syndicate of financiers came down here this week and made me what I consider to be a fair price for the whole of the estate. They offered me twelve thousand pounds; you know that I gave fifteen for it. It means losing three thousand pounds, but it also means I shall not have to keep calling on you for the little extra to fight down creditors' bills. What shall I do? Sell, or hang on in the hope that somebody in dreamland will come along and rescue me? Twelve thousand pounds! It's a lot of money: I can buy a nice little cottage property here for three or four thousand and live fairly comfortably for the rest of my days. I do hope that you have found

the gold for which you set out. I know that it has been a hard life for you during the last twelve months, but I also know the tremendous courage you have and I feel that you will keep plugging on and on until you have reached your goal. The thing is, shall I sell or shall I go on, day to day, hoping against hope that something will turn up?"

The boy Malcolm had learned a great deal about life by this time. He realised that sentiment wasn't worth very much, materially. He felt that twelve thousand pounds was a fairly substantial capital on which his father could subsist until he himself had reached his goal and could return to England with the fortune of which he had dreamed. So he managed to get a message back, saying: "Sell it and sell all that I possess there. I am on the road to success and I would like to think that you were living in comfort while I was achieving my big ambition."

That was all. The next he heard — the message came from the nowhere, but it reached him—was that the Muirbank Estate had been sold, the debts had been paid off, the father was established in a small cottage property.

Malcolm went on fighting against the natural elements, the cold and the snow, the blizzards and the hunger. Sometimes the weariness of the flesh called to him to lie down and leave it to others to persevere; and in his heart there were two calls—the one was that of his father whom he loved; the other was that of the little woman on the ranch who believed in him and who had seen him go forth into the wilderness, looking for the wealth which the earth might give him when it humoured her to give it. They were great days, hard and difficult days. The boy, nurtured in the comparative comfort of an English college, taught to appraise and admire and emulate the courtesy of the sons of English gentlemen, was thrown against the flotsam and jetsam of life: men who had roughed it from birth, men who wanted wealth even as he, men who were prepared to subordinate anything in the semblance of culture so that with their physical strength, their arrogance, their domineering spirit, they could beat to their knees any-



one who dared or even threatened to thwart them in their search for gold. He knew what it was to sleep when the mercury sank thirty degrees below zero: he knew what it was to feel his hands and fingers dead, white and numb under the chill of frost: he knew what it was to face a great bearded miner who had trailed the trail a score of times and could fling a fist as swiftly as his revolver could fling a bullet. He took blows on his physical body; he took them on his sensitive soul; he learned that men, in their

greed, would sacrifice even their gods for that which might bring them a little luxury in their earthly travail.

Month after month, hard grinding work, weeks of disappointment, hopes rising and falling as they sifted the mud in their search for the " dust."

And, when it was all over, when he realised that he must trek back—back into eastern Canada—and look again for employment on one of the ranches with far-flung acres and herds of cattle, when he felt that the manhood in him demanded that he should go back and find manly work for his hands to do, he crushed out of his heart all the mad dreams of quickly-made riches and said to himself: " I was given this body, full of strength and energy, in order that I might work. I have found no gold where I hoped to find it: I am just one man in millions. There's a niche for me somewhere, and who shall say that it isn't on these prairies? But, I wish that I could have done something for the dear old pater. I wish that I could have said to him: ' I have won, Dad. Here is all that will make you happy for the rest of your days.' Instead of that, I have done little or nothing; I've lost; I've met my man and I've struck my man, I've fought with my man, I've done all that one expects of a fellow in this life, but when I reflect on it I realise that somewhere, somehow, I've missed the bend in the road." He was no philosopher. He was a simple traveller along the Road which we, all of us, must travel. He knew, instinctively, inherently, if you will, that he had missed that signpost which says: " Use your brains and consider carefully the portion that has been given to you to do."



" The majority of us go through life looking for the big star that is always just around the corner."

Great boy, Malcolm! Sweet of temperament, noble of character, full of filial devotedness, conscious of all that he owed to his father. He had failed, as we understand failure. But when he got back to Edmonton—when he was sitting on the veranda of the ranch where he had toiled before he set his face westward—when he sat beside her, the bronze-faced girl who had regarded him as an English god, there came over him a wave of emotion that swept away all the bitterness of disillusionment and inspired him with a courage that would carry him on from day to day.

She said to him, as they sat there in the moonlight—in front of them the seas of silver-painted prairie—she said to him: " You have roughed it, big boy."

" I have lived among men," said he.

" You set out to find so much and found so little," she said.

"I found you at the end of my wanderings," he said, "and that's something."

"You are not afraid of hard work?" she said.

"I have been fighting it for a long while," he replied.

And she asked him: "Wouldn't you like to stay here? Wouldn't you like to live your life on these prairies and feel that you had helped to add a little to the old world that you found when you were born?"

"You bet, kid!" he said.

Then, after a little hesitation, she showed him the letter which had reached her from his father some weeks before he arrived back at the ranch. It was the letter of a man who felt that his neighbour had wronged him. In this letter, the father said:

"Boy, we have been done! Really, there was no need for you to go abroad to find the fortune that would have pulled this old estate together. As I told you in my last letter, I had the offer of twelve thousand pounds and I took it. The syndicate that bought the estate began, immediately, to sink their shafts! And they found it—*Coal!* All over the place! Great seams of coal that will bring them in probably a million! And we sold it for twelve thousand pounds! Isn't life damnable?"

And the boy Malcolm, sitting there on the veranda, with the scent of the woman's hair in his nostrils and the knowledge that on those prairies he had a throne to fill, laughed into the moonlight as he said to her:

"Kiddie, will you write the reply to the old pater, because my fingers are thick and swollen—the frost-bite has been in them? Write to him and say that I think it is the finest thing that ever happened to me: it's the finest lesson I've ever had. The majority of us go through life looking for the big star that is always just around the corner, and we forget, in pursuit of it, that we are treading over the best things in life. I wonder who's at the head of this syndicate and discovered coal under the old pater's estate?"

And the girl, with the smile of a woman, said to him:

"I can tell you; it is in the postscript, but I felt I ought not to tell you until I had sounded you about the other."

"Go on," he said.

"The chairman of the syndicate," said the little woman, lifting her gaze to the edge of the horizon, where the gold of twilight was breaking into and melting with the silver, "the chairman of the syndicate," she said, "is an uncle of yours—Angus Davidson."

"That old devil!" said young Malcolm, but not in reproach. There was something like admiration in the tone of his voice.

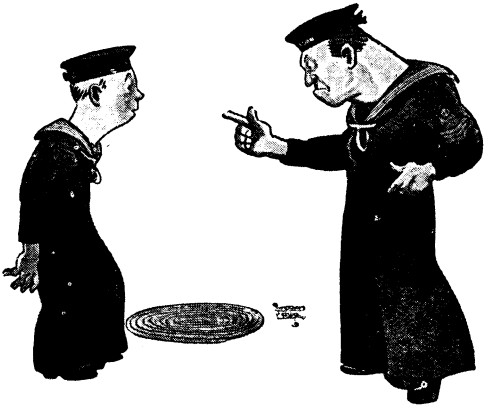
THE LITTLE LOVELY THINGS.

THE things which all my life have most delighted,
Are little unknown things without a name;
The weathercock upon the church spire turning,
The signpost standing by the road I came.

The puddle by the way reflecting sunlight,
The wind in trees that were profound before,
A bird that knows no cage, and song beginning,
The winking knocker on some cottage door.

The starving plant behind the window curtains
Put out to feel the comfort of the rain,
The setting forth upon some wild adventure,
And all the joy of coming home again.

DOROTHY DICKINSON.



THE CUSTOM OF THE SERVICE

By COMMANDER STEPHEN KING-HALL

Part Author of "The Middle Watch."

ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED LEETE.

The scene is a quarter-deck, with sky and distant shore as a background, since the ship is in harbour. It is better, but not essential, that all exits and entrances should be made from one side, the forrard side.

CURTAIN.

(*Enter a Side-boy (an impudent-faced youth). He picks up a rope which is lying on the deck and begins to coil it down.*)

(*Enter a Quartermaster (a big, hefty petty officer).*

QUARTERMASTER. Boy Gubbins!

SIDE-BOY. Yes, P.O.

QUARTERMASTER. Whatcher doin' there, eh?

SIDE-BOY. A-coilin' down this 'ere rope, P.O.

(*Petty officer stands hands on hips, surveying rope.*)

QUARTERMASTER. Ho! Are you? And 'oo the 'ell taught you to coil down ropes in left-'anded spirals, eh?

SIDE-BOY. Leading Seaman Bloggs, sir!

QUARTERMASTER. Yuss, he would! Get out of it! Watch ME!

(*The petty officer coils the rope right-handed.*)

See THAT!

SIDE-BOY. Yes, P.O!

QUARTERMASTER. And dontcher-blinkin'-well-forgit-it-me lad, or I'll 'ave yer in'-ards fer a necktie next time I goes ashore! Come 'ere! I 'ain't agoin' ter kill you! Not now, any'ow, I'm too busy. Do you know Petty Officer Barnes wots due to relieve me?

SIDE-BOY. Yes, P.O!

QUARTERMASTER. A very big man with a lot of 'air on the back of 'is hands?

SIDE-BOY. Yes, P.O.

QUARTERMASTER. Well, you nip forrard to 'is Mess and if 'ee's asleep, and I knows 'ee is, give 'im a good shake and tell 'im that if 'ee's late in relievin' me again I'll knock 'is ugly chump inter the middle o' next week. Savee ?

SIDE-BOY. Yes, P.O !

QUARTERMASTER. 'Op it !

(*Exit Side-boy.*)

(*The Quartermaster takes a turn up the deck, and suddenly springs to attention as enter the Midshipman-of-the-Watch. The Midshipman has a telescope through which he looks all round. He suddenly sees the rope.*)

MIDSHIPMAN. Quartermaster !

QUARTERMASTER. Sir !

MIDSHIPMAN. What's the meaning of this ?

QUARTERMASTER. Meaning of what, sir ?

MIDSHIPMAN. This rope ! Can't you see the thing is coiled down right-handed ?

QUARTERMASTER. Good Lord, sir ! *So* it is !

MIDSHIPMAN. Of course it is ! But what I want to know is, who did it, do you 'spose ?

QUARTERMASTER. Must have been that young devil of a side-boy, sir ! I'll warm 'is hide for him. Boy Gubbins ! Boy Gubbins ! . . . Must 'ave nipped forrard while I 'ad my back turned, sir !



MIDSHIPMAN. Well, anyhow, have it put right at once. You know, Quartermaster, I expect an experienced petty officer like you to keep your eyes open for that sort of thing !

QUARTERMASTER. Yes, sir !

(*Quartermaster re-coils rope left-handed.*)

MIDSHIPMAN. Call away the Admiral's barge !

QUARTERMASTER. Aye ! Aye ! Sir ! (*Blows his pipe and exits calling :*) Away Admiral's Barge !

(*Other voices are heard repeating the pipe, which fades away after the fourth repetition.*)

(*Exit Quartermaster.*)

(*Enter the Officer-of-the-Watch—a lieutenant in a frock-coat and with a telescope. He looks about him with his telescope. The Midshipman follows motions, one eye to his telescope, the other on the Officer-of-the-Watch, so as to be sure that he is looking in the same direction as his superior officer. The Officer-of-the-Watch suddenly sees the rope.*)

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. Midshipman-of-the-Watch !

MIDSHIPMAN. Sir !

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. What's the meaning of this ? Do you think the quarter-deck is a refuse heap, or what ?

MIDSHIPMAN. No, sir.

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. Look at that darned rope.

MIDSHIPMAN. Yes, sir !

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. Well, look at it.

MIDSHIPMAN. I am, sir !

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. CAN'T YOU SEE the thing is coiled down left-handed ?

MIDSHIPMAN. Good heavens, sir ! So it is !

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. Have it put right at once. You're a public-school entry, I suppose ?

MIDSHIPMAN. Yes, sir.

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. I'm *not* surprised. You *must* keep your eyes open.

MIDSHIPMAN. Yes, sir. I think the Quartermaster . . .

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. And look here, young fella-my-lad, when you've made a mess of things, *don't* try and hand the baby on to anyone else—see ?

MIDSHIPMAN. Yes, sir. . . . Quartermaster !

QUARTERMASTER. Sir !

MIDSHIPMAN. Put that rope right—it's coiled down left-handed.

QUARTERMASTER. Good 'evins, sir ! So it is. (*Business with rope.*)

(*Enter the Commander. Business with telescope. Officer-of-the-Watch and Midshipman follow his motions with their telescopes. Commander suddenly sees rope. Glares at it.*)

COMMANDER. Officer-of-the-Watch !

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. Sir !

COMMANDER. Well !

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. Yes, sir !

COMMANDER. Hang it, where are your eyes ?

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. What, sir ?

COMMANDER. What's the use of whatting me—what ? Can't you see that rope at your feet ?

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. What—I mean —— Why—er—who—er—— How—sir ?

COMMANDER. Isn't the confounded thing coiled down right-handed ?

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. By Jove, sir ! Snottie—put that right at once !

COMMANDER. You really must keep your wits about you ! I'm hanged if I know what's the matter with you all.

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. Of course, we've had no war experience, sir.

COMMANDER. That may be it, but as I've told you over and over again, when in doubt —and I imagine you always are in doubt— ask ME. I am available day and night. If I'm not on the fo'c'sle, I'm on the quarter-deck ! If I'm not there, I'm reading some confounded Memorandum in my cabin.

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. Yes, sir.

(*Enter Captain.*)

(*All move across the deck. Captain walks up and down ; stops and looks up at sea-gull through telescope. All telescopes follow suit.*)



CAPTAIN. Commander ! Officer-of-the-Watch !

COMMANDER. }
OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. } Sir !

CAPTAIN. What's that bird doing up there ? Hawk, isn't it ?

COMMANDER. Sea-gull, I think, sir. (*Looks through telescope.*)

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH (*looks through glass*). Maybe a sea-hawk, sir !

CAPTAIN. Well, anyhow, what's the dashed thing doing on the main truck ?

COMMANDER. }
OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. } Hand about it, sir !

(*Exit rapidly Midshipman.*)

CAPTAIN. I should hope so ! (*Looks through glass at the next ship.*) The fleet flag-ship's masts are devoid of birds ! I *will* have uniformity, Commander ! I will *not* have the ship made into a floating aviary ! I will . . .

(*There is a crash and a new-laid egg falls from above, smashing on deck and splashing Captain's shoes.*)

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. It's laid an egg, sir !

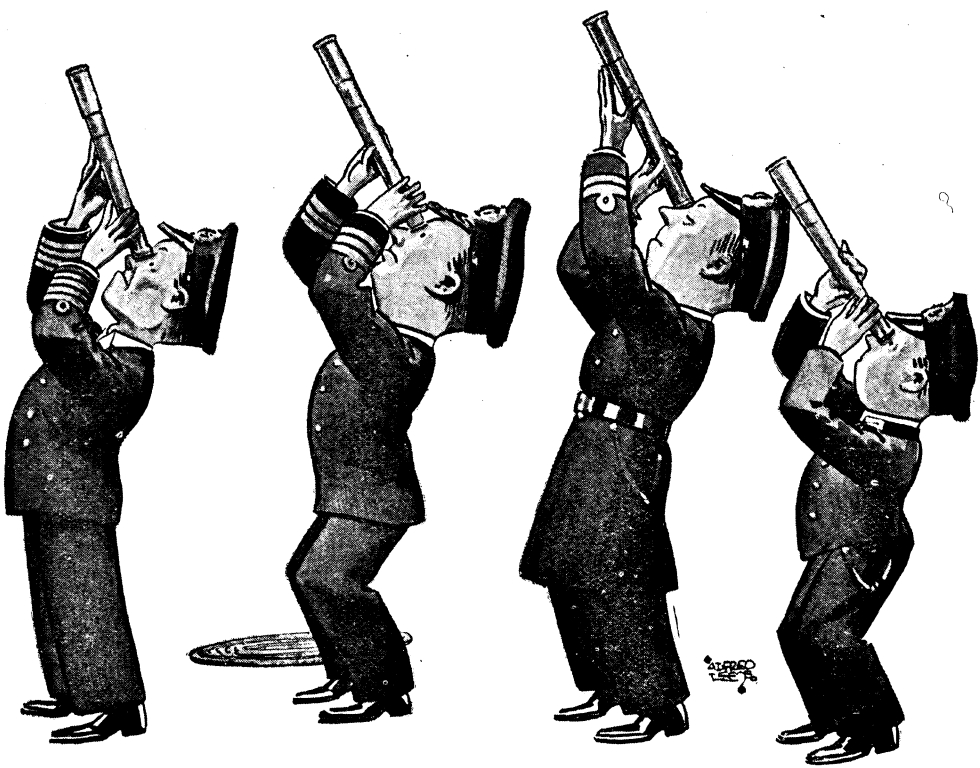
CAPTAIN (*furious*). You silly young ass ! Do you think I'm blind ? Do you think I'm in the habit of scrambling eggs on the quarter-deck ? Do you think I'm a conjuror and dropped this myself ? Do you think—— OH, hang it ! Does anyone in this ship except me think of anything at

all? Answer me, boy, don't stand there with that idiotic expression on your face!

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. N-n-n-n-o, sir.

CAPTAIN (*to Commander*). That's the trouble about these young officers; they can't think. If you had thought for a moment you'd have foreseen this! Perfectly obvious the bird was up to no good! Must have had an object in squatting up there.

COMMANDER. Probably began to feel tail heavy, sir.



CAPTAIN. Obviously! And if this boy had his wits about him . . . (*Sees rope—looks at it through his telescope.*) COMMANDER!

COMMANDER. Sir!

CAPTAIN. Well? Don't you see anything wrong with the ship?

(*There is a bang off. All look up.*)

COMMANDER. The bird's gone, sir! Making for the "Furious"!

CAPTAIN. Drat the bird! Can't you see anything wrong with the quarter-deck?

COMMANDER. I'll have the egg cleaned up at once, sir!

CAPTAIN. Goodness me! Are you all blind? THIS (*kicks rope*)—can't you see it's coiled down right-handed?

COMMANDER. Good heavens, sir! So it was! Officer-of-the-Watch!

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. Sir!

COMMANDER. Have that seen to at once. Disgraceful!

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. Midshipman-of-the-Watch! Quartermaster! Side-boy!

(*All come running up.*)

Coil that down properly at once.

MIDSHIPMAN. } {Left-handed, sir?
PETTY OFFICER. } {Right-handed, sir?
SIDE-BOY. } {Left-handed, sir?

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. Right-handed, of course!

COMMANDER. NO! NO! NO! Left-handed, I told you! Have that egg coiled

down and that rope cleaned up at once. (*Walks away.*)

(*There is a loud crash as the barge hits the gangway. Rope is coiled down.*)

PETTY OFFICER (*saluting to Midshipman*). Barge alongside, sir!

MIDSHIPMAN (*saluting to Officer-of-the-Watch*). Barge alongside, sir!

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH (*saluting to Commander*). Barge alongside, sir!

COMMANDER (*saluting to Captain*). Barge alongside, sir!

(*Exit Captain.*)

CAPTAIN (*saluting to Admiral—off*). Barge alongside, sir!

ADMIRAL. I heard it! I heard it! Flag Captain!

(*Re-enter Captain and Admiral.*)

(*Stands and looks round.*) Most attractive those sea-birds are flying round the ship!

CAPTAIN. Most attractive, sir.

ADMIRAL. Puffins, are they not, Flag Captain?

CAPTAIN. Yes—sir! Puffins, I believe.

ADMIRAL (*suddenly sees rope. Stops dead*). Flag Captain!

CAPTAIN. Sir?

ADMIRAL. Reluctant as I always am to interfere in the internal organisation of the ship, yet I feel bound to observe that the appearance of that rope offends my seaman eye.

CAPTAIN (*looks hard at rope*). Good Lord, sir! Coiled down left-handed! Officer-of-the-Watch, have that put right!

ADMIRAL. Coiled? Did you say, Flag Captain? COILED DOWN?

CAPTAIN. Er—yes, sir!

ADMIRAL. Since when, pray, have ropes in that particular condition been referred to as coiled? Pray correct me if I am wrong, but when I was in the Training Service in the eighties, a rope so displayed was invariably referred to as cheesed. Surely, Flag Captain, the word is not new to you? Officer-of-the-Watch!

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. Sir!

ADMIRAL. How would you describe that rope?

OFFICER-OF-THE-WATCH. As being coy—er—cheesed, sir.

ADMIRAL. I should hope so, but whether it is cheesed down right- or left-handed is a matter of complete indifference to me, and of no importance to the Service.

CAPTAIN. Quite, sir!

ADMIRAL. My complaint is that it is cheesed down left- or right-handed at all. When I was a younger man I was brought up in the doctrine that ropes were never cheesed down in that manner on quarter-decks!

CAPTAIN. No, sir? You mean, sir?

ADMIRAL. Hang it, man! Faked in a figure-of-eight knot fashion, of course! (*As the Admiral goes over the side.*)

CURTAIN.

SWALLOWS AGAIN.

IT makes me feel as young as April grass
To see the swallows here dipping their wings
Into the shining waters smooth as glass.
I wonder if the fluttering fleet things
Are flirting with their images. They touch
With light staccato kiss their mirrored bills
And then they rise like stars; they rival such
In their own bird-like way against the hills.
It makes me feel as young as willow-blooms,
Where now the first-formed yellow pollen rests,
To see these sprites with scintillating plumes—
Their backs night-blue, and starlight for their breasts.
Swallows! Spring carols in their very name;
Their motion fans my fancy to a flame.

L. MOULTON.

THE OLD AND THE NEW SOCIALISM

REMEDIES FOR UNEMPLOYMENT

By the
RIGHT HON. LORD MELCHETT, P.C.[1]

THE rationalisation of industry is the chief instrument of the "new industrial revolution," and its effects, of course, will be manifold in all directions. Two of the most important of these effects, providing rationalisation is fully and efficiently carried out, will be firstly the elimination of all causes and all motives for class antagonism or class warfare as between employers and workers, and secondly the complete adjustment as far as is humanly possible of production to demand.

Both these effects of rationalisation will obviously have further direct effects upon the problem of unemployment. One will be the elimination of periodical slumps and booms in trade, which have been largely responsible for making unemployment a persistent factor of our industrial life since the middle of last century. The old industrial revolution which was in operation at that time brought with it the great advantages of vastly increased production and a raised standard of living for the whole community. Unfortunately it brought with it also two distinct disadvantages: a growing antagonism between employers and workers, and also, more generally, a "warfare" between two classes of individuals, the services of each of which are equally essential to production. Thus we were presented with the terms "Socialism" and "Capitalism" as illustrating two diametrically opposed systems and conditions, and with them a growing insecurity in our economic life, with its slumps and booms, its strikes and lock-outs, disastrous to both employers and workers.

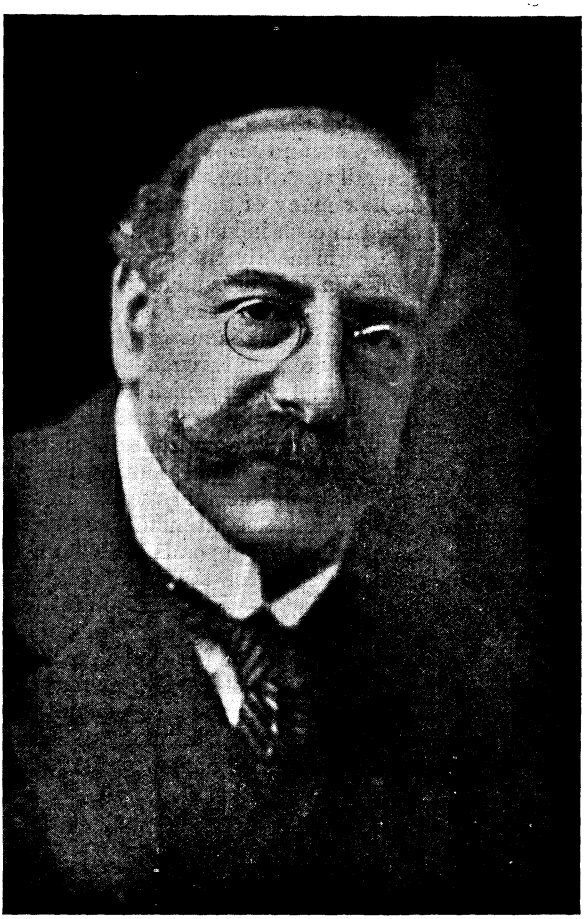
The new industrial revolution, while securing the undoubted advantages of the old, aims at eliminating the two disadvantages I have outlined. To explain this in more detail demands a survey of the forces at work in the past and to-day, for from this we can gather why the process of rationalisation promises in itself to bring about the elimination of those two great cancers of modern industrial life—class hostility and unemployment.

The Socialist movement of to-day is different from the early Socialist movement of the nineteenth century, and if it is pursuing the same ends it does so for different reasons. The Marxian Socialism of the last century attributed the low wages and apparent pauperism of the workers to their "exploitation" by the Capitalist class, and called for State enterprise in order to eliminate this exploitation. The science of statistics has since shown that the incidence of "exploitation" has very little to do with the standard of living of the workers, because a completely equal distribution of the national income, under the given standard of production, could only raise the level of wages by a very few degrees. Since, then, most of the Socialists and economists of all countries agree that the general level of wages depends mainly, if not solely, on the productivity of labour, that is on the efficiency of production, and since anything which diminishes it will lower wages—irrespective of the particular political system under which industry is conducted—it follows that if Labour leaders still call for State enterprise it is because, in their

[1] In an interview.

opinion, industry is not at present conducted on the highest level of efficiency. They believe that an industry rationalised through "nationalisation" could secure a higher standard of production to the nation than the present system.

It is hard to see how the efficiency of production could be increased simply by the industry being conducted by Government departments instead of private individuals



[*Russell, London.*

LORD MELCHETT.

(and there are very good reasons which indicate that it would actually be less efficient), although I agree that the efficiency of production in this country at present is not on the highest possible standard. Nevertheless the whole issue between "private enterprise" and "public enterprise" seems to be tremendously over-exaggerated. After all, the vital question is not *who* is conducting industry but *how* is industry conducted; not one of political theory but one of industrial expediency. I can very well imagine very good or very bad managements both in industry and in public bodies. But the efficiency of production can only be raised by rationalisation; through the organisation of production in the most economic units, the closing down of obsolete plant and machinery, and through the carrying out of all the other processes which the term "rationalisation" implies.

In this way rationalisation aims at bringing production to the highest possible standard of efficiency which the present state of science will permit. What the Marxian Socialists thought to achieve through "nationalisation" is actually going to be achieved in a much shorter and much more successful way through "rationalisation." The aims in this respect of industrial efficiency at least are common; the methods are different. But enlightened Labour opinion in Great Britain is already supporting progressive employers in their efforts towards "efficiency."

Once rationalisation is fully carried out, the old foolish controversy between "Socialism" and "Capitalism," "private" and "public" enterprise, is wiped out altogether, since no reforms of a political nature could increase efficiency when it is already on the highest standard. In the common demand for efficient enterprise the progressive industrialists and enlightened trade union leaders of this country are at one; and we have every reason to hope that once more Great Britain will take the lead of the world in giving a great constructive legacy to future generations; namely, the successful, prosperous co-operation of Capital and Labour.

The second important consequence which I anticipate as an ultimate effect of rationalisation is the eventual elimination of unemployment. Unemployment, as we all know, is always due to maladjustment, to the unsatisfactory adjustment of production to consumption. Before the war this maladjustment was due to the periodical cycles of good and bad trade; but since the war it is due also to some other causes, such as the re-arrangement of British industry

to face the conditions of war and the difficulties of its re-adjustment to conditions of peace; the creation of national industries in many countries during and after the war, involving a fall in demand for British goods.

As I have said, if rationalisation succeeds in achieving anything, it is the complete adjustment of production to consumption and the elimination of those jumps and zigzags of slump and boom which have been so detrimental to the stability of trade. This is but an ultimate effect which will take years to accomplish. Meanwhile it is probable that the process of rationalisation will temporarily increase unemployment to some degree owing to the displacement of labour by the introduction of labour-saving methods and plant.

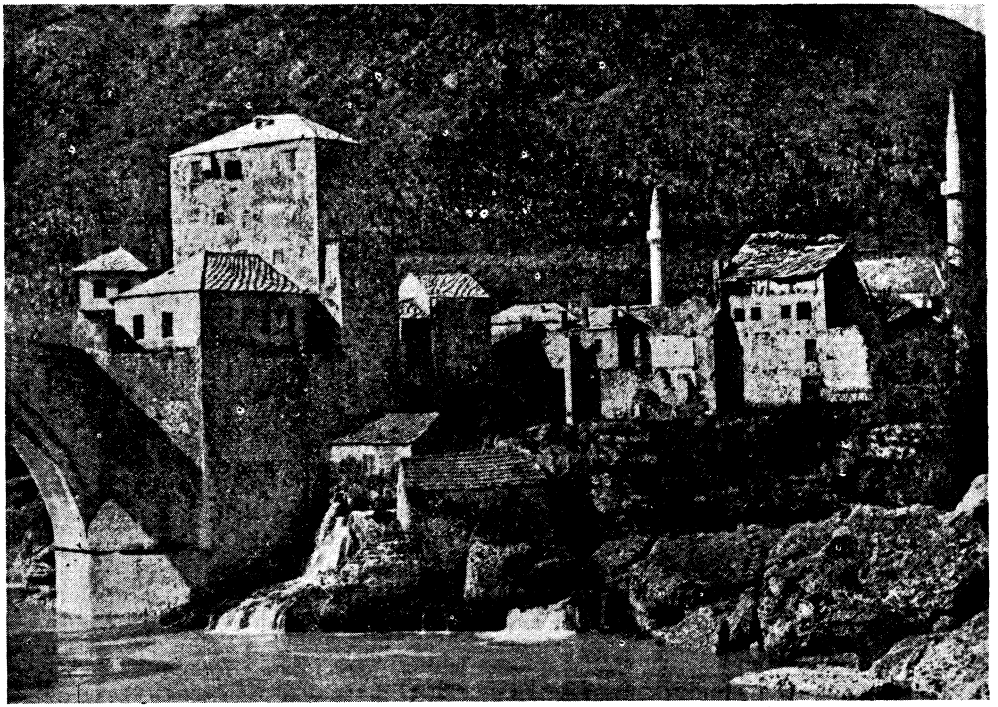
It is, however, significant that in the case of Imperial Chemical Industries Limited, which is one of the few, perhaps the only one, of the undertakings of this country where there has been an approach to the full achievement of rationalisation, there has actually been an increase in employment after rationalisation, for the 40,000 employees of 1926 have expanded to the 53,000 of 1929. Admittedly this is largely due to the absorption of several other companies in various allied branches of production, but much of it is also due to definite new expansion. This is a particular instance, and in general it may be acknowledged that rationalisation in its first effects may lead to a further temporary increase in unemployment—always with emphasis on the "temporary," in view of the subsequent absorption which can be confidently expected from new efficiencies and a new standard of prosperity.

The gravity and extent of the different causes which make for unemployment place this question at present, and will place it in the next few years, in the first rank as a problem of our national life. It is a question which calls for urgent thought; some of the remedies suggested may even cause more harm to our international competitive power than they can give benefit in the direction of less unemployment. The object must always be wherever possible to find employment for workers in the same or similar industries in which they were trained. It is difficult to imagine 50,000 workless cotton-spinners engaged in road-making. It is true that in some of the basic industries, notably coal, there seems no scope for re-absorption, and, generally speaking, it is difficult to estimate how many of the workers could be re-absorbed in each industry and how many should be permanently transferred to other industries. Public works might increase the total national wealth if the cost of them is not too expensive for industry generally to bear; but the creation through Government loans of artificial work which reduces the capital available for export, and so places British industry in a more difficult position in foreign markets, could hardly be an effective remedy of unemployment. In my view, apart from the ultimate remedy in rationalisation, the proposals of the Unemployment Report of the Conference on Industrial Reorganisation and Industrial Relations, the augmenting of pensions for workers over 65 out of national insurance, the raising of the school-leaving age and the co-ordination of funds assisting emigration, could be utilised as the most effective immediate remedies for unemployment.

A PRAYER.

GOODNIGHT, God, let me thank Thee
For this day's company.
For I have walked the whole day long
With Thee, till tired. But Thou art strong
To keep on still. I will rest awhile
Till Thou shalt come again with morning smile,
There is no need for me to pray,
Rather, "Goodnight, God," let me say.

ELSIE L. TAYLOR.



MOSTAR, THE CAPITAL OF HERZEGOVINA.

ON THE ROAD IN YUGOSLAVIA

By HENRY BAERLEIN

Photographs by A. B. Lucy.

TO see Yugoslavia one must travel by car, for the railways are very inadequate. But to go by car is a strenuous enterprise, as the distances between one hostelry and another are often great and the intervening roads are of varying qualities. Mile after mile is over loose stones, which the local authorities lay down and then leave for the motorist to do the rest. All the more, therefore, does one appreciate those regions where the surface is what may be called European, which is the case throughout Slovenia, the north-westerly province of Yugoslavia and the one which is in other respects the most advanced. It has only 18 per cent. of illiterates, whereas there are certain parts of the country, notably the Muhammedan districts, where the literate population is only about 18 per cent.

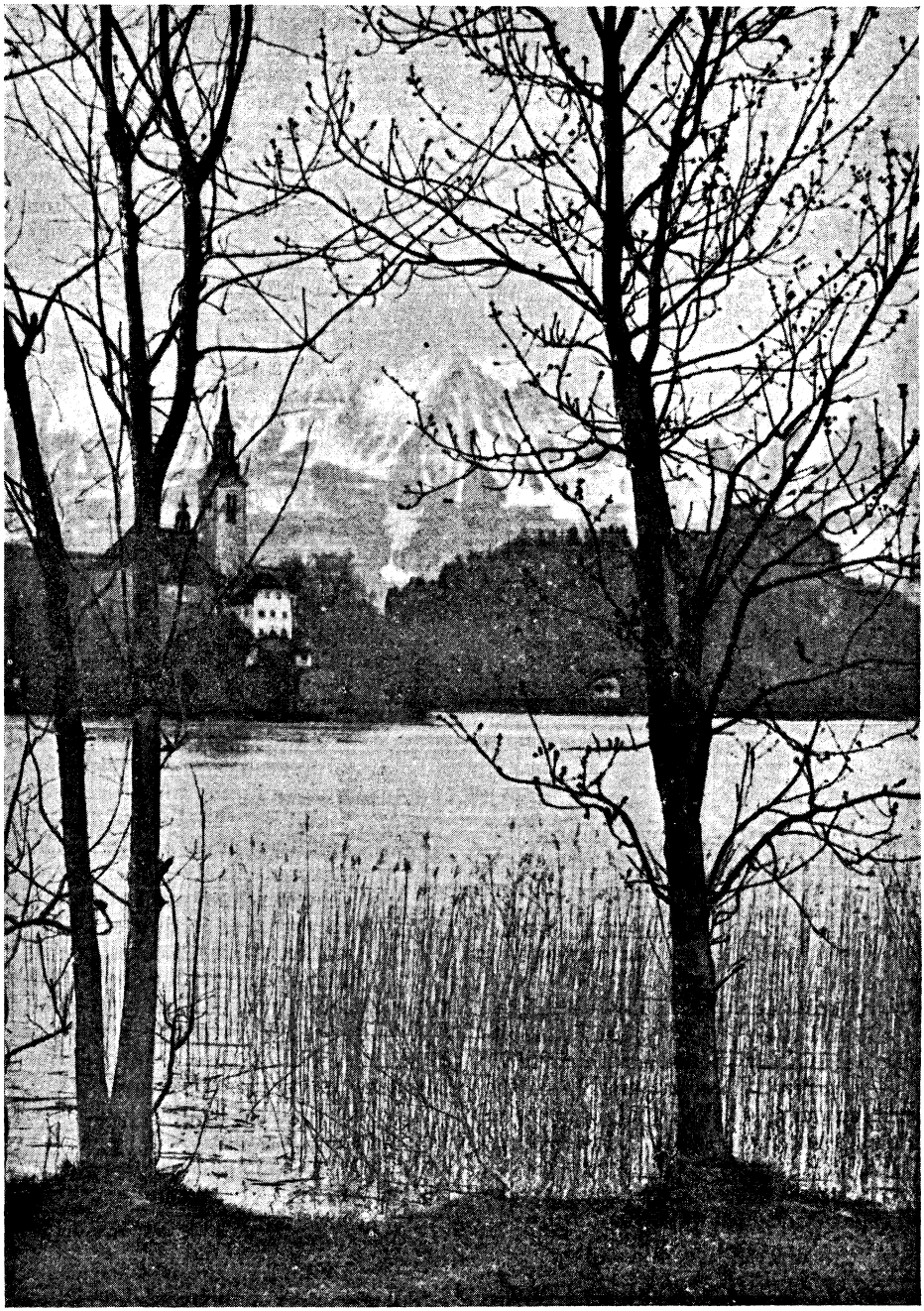
A party of us—fourteen men and ten ladies—set out on this adventurous journey,

and on the very first motoring day we had a taste of Balkan life. We had, rather optimistically, started from Zagreb, the prosperous capital of Croatia, at 1.30 in the afternoon, with the intention of reaching Crkvenica, on the Adriatic, for dinner. We actually arrived at 2.30 the next morning. All had gone well until tea-time, and then we noticed that two spare tyres had been removed from the back of the luggage-car—the string having been cut. We ourselves were travelling in two large touring-cars, each of which held a dozen passengers. As we naturally valued our tyres, we sent the luggage-car, with its two young chauffeurs, to try to recover them. This was a few miles beyond Karlovac, the second town of Croatia, and before arriving there the chauffeurs overtook a peasant complete with tyres. He maintained that he had found them and he was willing to sell them for a thousand dinars each, that is about £8 for the two. Our chauffeurs made him get into the car, and they drove him and the tyres to the Karlovac gendarmerie, where the presiding Solomon arranged that the peasant should received a hundred dinars for each tyre.

This interlude caused us to resume our journey in the twilight, and it was merciful that the darkness came apace, so that the more nervous members of the party could not see that we were skidding by the side of grievous precipices. A mixture of snow, sleet and rain began to pelt down upon us, and the ruts of the road did not add to the amenities. We had a very jovial chauffeur, Fritz by name, who from time to time exclaimed "All right!" This was his entire stock of English, and though he declared that he would learn our language during the tour, it is a sad fact that his vocabulary at the end of it had not been increased. On that first night, at all events, he had other things to do; as he revealed to us afterwards, he uttered the Lord's Prayer fifty-two times, to the end that we should be spared any trouble with the cars. His prayers were answered, except with regard to the luggage-car, from whose mechanism a miscreant had abstracted a rather vital part. The chauffeurs' efforts to substitute other mechanism made the car look a little as if Mr. Heath Robinson had assisted them. It was not until we reached Bihać, the first place in Bosnia, several days later, that the missing part was replaced; and from thence onward the gallant little car gave us no trouble, although with its 1½ tons of luggage it found some of the hair-pin mountain roads a severe proposition.

Off the coast of the eastern Adriatic there is an almost continuous chain of islands, large and small and much more interesting than, for example, the many islands through which one sails between Stockholm and Leningrad, for these latter have on them no historic buildings, and they are so much alike, with their rocks and trees, that it seems wonderful that the pilot can find his way among them. Far more distinctive are the Adriatic islands, and one of the most fascinating of them is Rab, which the Italians call Arbe—a good name, for it is covered with vegetation, while some of its neighbours are so bare that not the most modest sea-gull will build a nest upon them. In order to reach Rab one has a journey of some five hours from the port of Crkvenica in a wobbly little vessel. We took the precaution of ordering our lunch to be served to us during the half-hour that would be spent in the harbour of Zengg. This place's chief claim to distinction is that it was a noted haunt of Yugoslav pirates; and those who too warmly espoused the cause of Italy after the War demanded that the Yugoslavs should be deprived of Fiume (half of which, the port of Sushak, they now possess), and given Zengg for their chief port, because no one, they urged, had ever heard of a Yugoslav mariner, and what did that people want with a sea-coast, anyway? These publicists were unaware of the fact that 70 to 80 per cent. of the Austro-Hungarian navy had been Yugoslav, recruited from Istria and Dalmatia. And Zengg, when the bora blows down from the north, is so difficult to enter that a ship has been known to lie outside it for a fortnight.

The approach to the town of Rab is most dramatic. After sailing along the pleasantly wooded western side, where two or three capacious fishing-boats will be at work—their sails varying from pale yellow to brown—you suddenly turn a corner and perceive what looks like a ship built of stone, with four great masts, one behind the other. These are the mediæval towers of Rab that rise from a rocky and narrow peninsula, the most southerly point of the enchanting little town. Sir Thomas Jackson, R.A., calls Rab the gem of Dalmatia, and it is satisfactory to learn that public opinion in that place is so anxious to preserve the ancient glories that a wealthy and ignorant iconoclast who destroyed part of a beautiful wall, to give more light to his



BLED, THE BEAUTIFUL LITTLE LAKE IN SLOVENIA, HAS BECOME THE FASHIONABLE RESORT OF YUGOSLAVIA.

The lake is surrounded by villas, including one that belongs to King Alexander. Chamois, wolves and other animals, also partridges, are shot in the surrounding country; and within a mile of the lake is some of the best trout fishing in the world.



IN ZAGREB MARKET-PLACE.

Zagreb is the capital of Croatia, one of the chief provinces of Yugoslavia. Until the end of the War it was under the Hungarians, although the Croats are Slavs. Their language is exactly the same as Serbian, though they, being Catholic, use the Latin alphabet, while the Serbs, being orthodox, use the Cyriltic.

tomatoes, has been practically ostracised. For a town of less than a thousand inhabitants Rab is lavishly provided with churches and monasteries. These are mainly of the fifteenth century, but the remains of the formidable sea-wall are Illyrian. Some of the mediæval dwellings have gloriously carved doorways and windows, dating from the time when Venice held this island; other houses, with their walled-up windows, are a grim reminder of the Plague. It was not found possible to care for all the sick, and so when the majority of the inmates in a house were lying ill that house was often turned into a living tomb. Nowadays the people of Rab are remarkable for their kindliness towards each other—the proprietor of our hotel is involved in a law-suit with a gentleman who alleges that another hotel which the proprietor is erecting interferes with his ancient lights. But, pending the trial, this gentleman does not hesitate to frequent the hotel of his antagonist. Perhaps he cannot tear himself away from the vermouth which the proprietor's wife manufactures. It is concocted of eighteen herbs which are found on the island.

Among the illustrious sons of the island were Marcantonio de Dominis, the renowned scientist and archbishop of Spalato, who fell a victim to the Inquisition in 1624, and the hermit Marianus who, in the second century after Christ, migrated to Italy and founded what is now the most venerable of European States, the Republic of San Marino. And among the present inhabitants of Rab is an elderly gentleman whose daily self-imposed task is to register the hours of sunlight; these during the course of a year add up to a tremendous total.

Dalmatia is cut off from the land behind it, Croatia and Herzegovina, by a terrific wall of mountains which is traversed in one or two places by means of a road cut with infinite labour out of the rock. In the Velebit range there are two such roads, both constructed in Austrian days. As they wind upward in great curves the scenery becomes wilder and wilder. Desolation reigns supreme. Perpendicular masses of grey stone confront you on every side, as in a nightmare; and if in the lowlands there has been a slight breeze, this on the heights is apt to be a gale. As we were half-way up the road into Croatia the hood of our car was suddenly torn off by a furious blast and like a sail it flapped to and fro, so that we were for a moment in danger of being swept over the precipice. Near the top of the pass, which rises to a height of 3,300 feet from the Adriatic, there stand a few buildings which date from 1841—a chapel, a house for the road-inspector and a house of refuge for travellers. The houses in this bleak part of the world are so scattered that, for example, it takes about five hours to walk through the village of Bukovica, to the south of our road. The population is partly Roman Catholic and partly of the Orthodox Church; each form of religion has one clergyman, who with the schoolmaster and

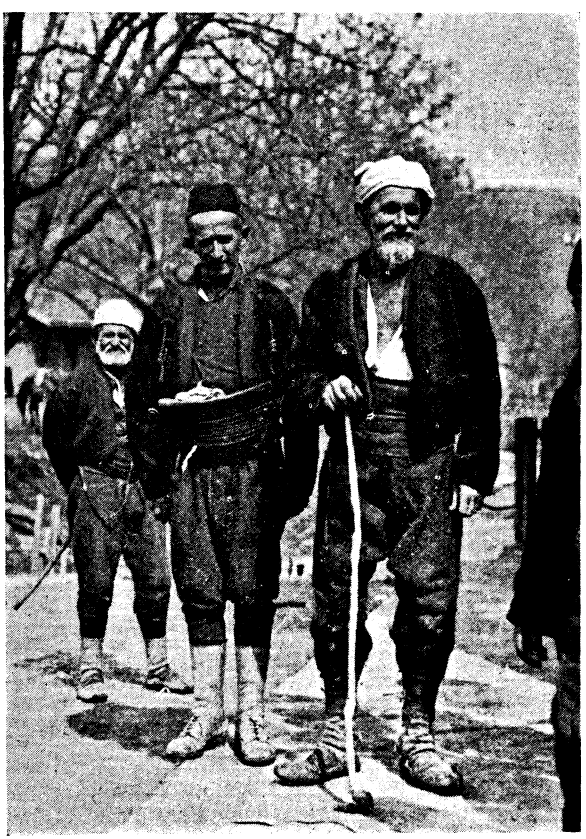
the gendarmes are the representatives of culture. The village is so dispersed that there are five or six burial-places, and it sometimes happens that the clergyman is told of a death many days after the funeral has been held.

"If," said Fritz, our genial chauffeur, "if I were to go to the United States and tell them that I come from Zagreb, they would stare at me, not knowing where it is. Even if I were to speak to them of Yugoslavia they would shake their heads. But if I were to mention the Lakes of Plitvice, then they would exclaim that they know all about them."

Certainly it is a fact that those of us who had seen Niagara were of opinion that one of Plitvice's many waterfalls surpasses it in magnificence. Plitvice consists of thirteen lakes that lie, one above the other, in a forest; and each lake is connected by waterfalls with the one beneath. It is a region of indescribable beauty, which also is a botanist's paradise, for on the banks are all kinds of rare flowers and shrubs. Between the lakes there is one of the best hotels in south-eastern Europe, where they give you admirable trout, to say nothing of a very pleasant little local wine.

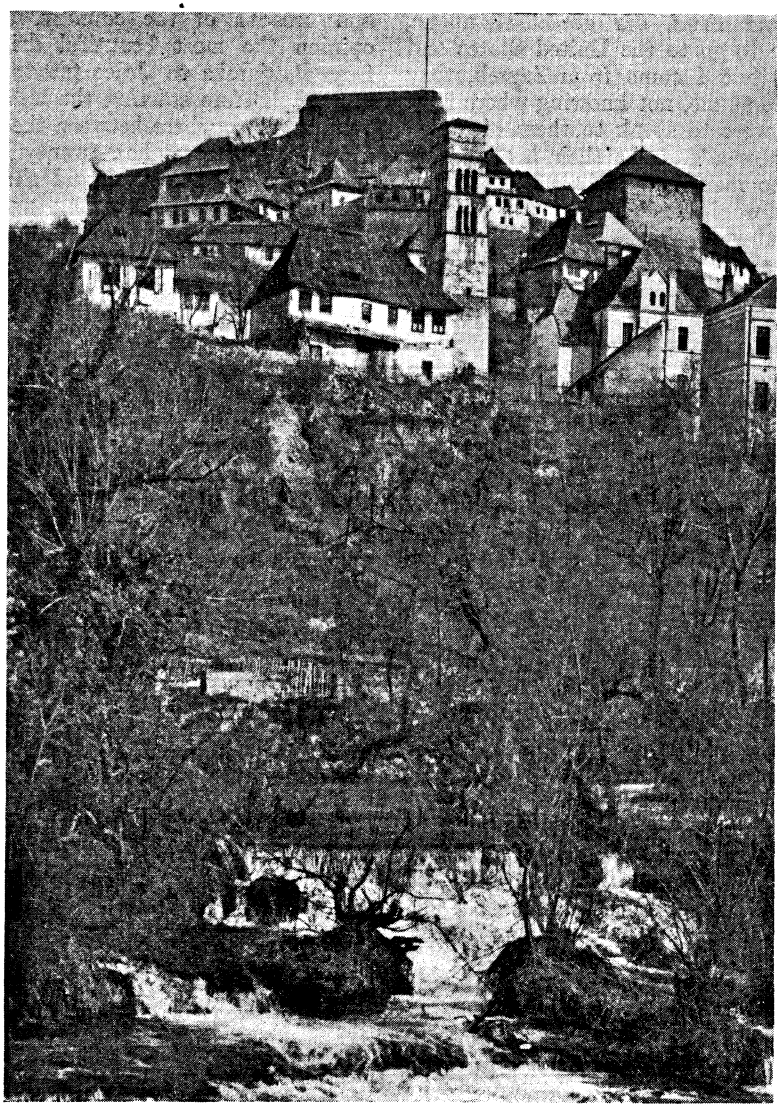
From Plitvice we took the road to Bosnia, which is the Muhammedan part of Yugoslavia. Although the followers of the Prophet are most assiduous in their observances, much more so than in present-day Turkey, yet the language they talk is the purest Serbian, for they are racially Yugoslavs. In the Middle Ages the Turkish troops penetrated to these parts and gave the inhabitants the choice of death or Islam. Gradually the Turkish cast of features has become visible in Bosnia, so that many an old man with his contemplative expression, and many a middle-aged one with a cruel look about him, seem to have flown on a magic carpet from the East. The illusion is, of course, assisted by their method of dress, and the Bosnian Muhammedan women habitually conceal their faces behind a black cloth, once they have attained to marriageable age. A veil of some kind is obligatory. Even the most advanced of the younger generation, with their stylish raiment and high-heeled shoes, wear a veil—in many cases a transparent one, but nevertheless paying this tribute to tradition.

The British Minister to Yugoslavia, Mr. Kennard, has travelled through the length and breadth of the country, and in his opinion the most beautiful drive is that from Banjaluka to Jajce (pronounced Yai-et-seh). Before starting through that marvellous gorge, where between the mountains there is, for more than twenty miles, only just room for the road and the river—on occasion the road is taken by tunnels underneath the mountain—we were confronted with a road which had been washed away. Rumours had been reaching us ever since we left Plitvice that a portion of our journey beyond Priejedor would be difficult. As we came nearer we heard that it would be very difficult, and finally at Priejedor we ascertained that our progress was barred. We were compelled to have the cars hoisted on to railway trucks; and it says a good deal for the maligned Yugoslav quality of



OLD MUHAMMEDAN PEASANTS IN BOSNIA.

organisation that, in spite of its being Easter Monday, as much a holiday as in England, we obtained this permission at once by telephoning down the line and having the railway chief brought back from an excursion other day ? We occupied our two or three hours at Priejedor by leaning over the wooden bridge that spans the broad, placid river and listening to the call of the muezzin from a neighbouring minaret. Twenty men



THE PICTURESQUE TOWN OF JAJCE.

Jajce (pronounced Yai-et-seh) was the capital of the ancient Bosnian Kingdom which flourished before the arrival in these parts of the Turks. Then Sarajevo became the capital. At Jajce is one of Europe's most magnificent waterfalls.

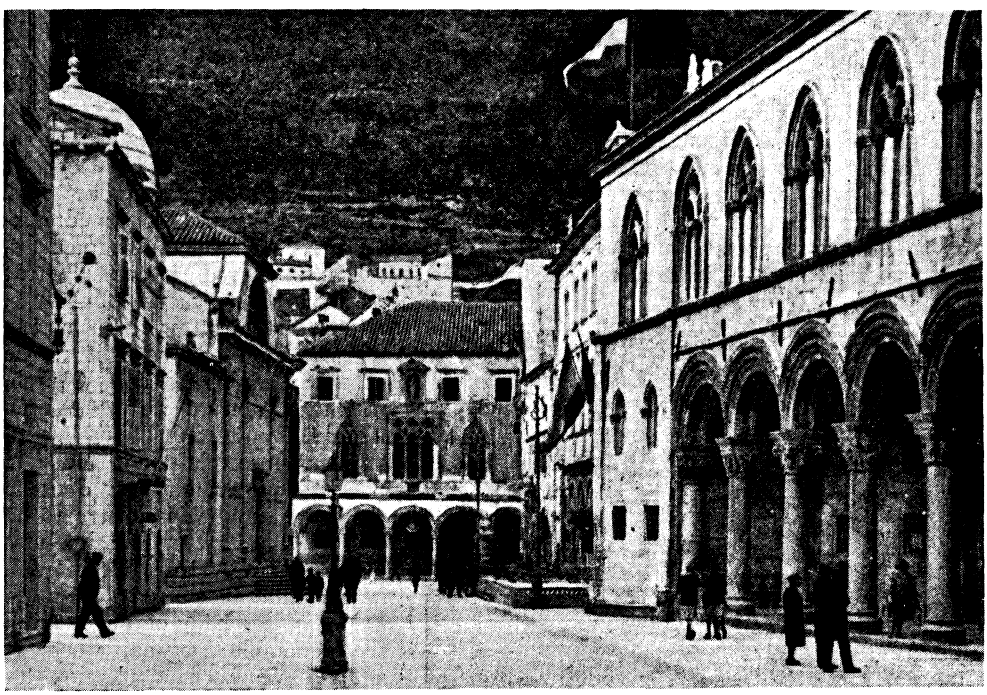
he was making with his family. He allowed us to have the three trucks fastened on to the evening passenger train, without the slightest red-tape. Would this, at a moment's notice, have been possible in England on a Bank Holiday or on any were needed to hoist each of our cars on to the trucks, and at Banjaluka, where we arrived at about eleven o'clock, the men had to work until five or six in the morning before the cars were deposited on *terra firma*.

A few miles from Banjaluka lies a large

Trappist monastery, founded in the middle of the last century. Of course, this was not accessible to the ladies of our party—but in another place they were taken over a harem, while we others drank Turkish coffee in an ante-room. It is well known that the monks of La Trappe are vowed to eternal silence, from which obligation our guide, a very capable German, was absolved. In fact, he told us that, administering all the monastery's lay activities, such as the cheese-making, the farms, the printing department, and so forth, he had to be talking from early until late. The abbot is also permitted to speak to any of the monks, who number about 150, and belong to eleven different nationalities. As this number does not suffice to keep the monastery in working order, about a hundred lay brothers are employed and a large number of orphans are maintained and educated. If a monk displays any particular talent he does not have to hide it under a bushel. Thus if he shows ability as a painter he will be sent to Munich, and naturally during that period he is at liberty to converse.

Not because it is the capital of Bosnia, but on account of what took place in 1914, the city of Sarajevo is now universally known. Several of our party went to the trouble of photographing the very commonplace street corner at which the assassination of the Archduke and his wife occurred. (A monument was placed there by the Austrians, but this after the War was removed by the Yugoslavs, and has now been replaced by one of their own.) Sarajevo is a wonderful mixture of West and East; it contains what is said to be the third finest mosque in the world—the colour-schemes of the mosaic façade are bewilderingly beautiful—and the lanes of little booths remind one of the souks in Cairo and Tunis. A sight to be enjoyed at Sarajevo is the famous trout that weighs 8 lb. She lives at Ilidje, a short distance from the town, where the State has a trout-breeding establishment, and this one admirable fish is the mother of all the millions and millions that have been reared in those waters.

Between Sarajevo and Mostar, the capital of Herzegovina, one traverses a pictur-



RAGUSA, ONE OF THE MOST PICTURESQUE TOWNS IN THE WORLD.

Up to the time of Napoleon Ragusa was an independent Republic. The building on the right is the Palace of the former Rector, and is now the Palace of the Yugoslav Royal Family. At the bottom of the street is the mediæval custom-house.

esquely wooded mountain range, for which the railway has to be equipped with rack-and-pinion machinery. It was on the Herzegovinian side that we were granted one of the most memorable sights of the whole tour, one that a Japanese poet would have immortalised in a seventeen-syllable piece—we saw the white blossoms of the cherry tree, and as a background, far away, the mountains of gleaming snow. At another part of this road a full-blown river rushes out from a wall of rock, and until one emerges into the fertile Mostar plain the road for many miles is cut out of the mountain-side. Innumerable artists have reproduced that bridge after which the town is named—"most" in the Serbian language signifies a bridge. "Kudret Kemeri" (i.e. the arch of divine power) it was called by the Turks, who built this most graceful structure in 1566 on foundations that are much older. And within a hundred or so yards of Kudret Kemeri there is a copy of it on a smaller scale, almost as ancient and overgrown with ivy. This smaller bridge is concealed among houses, and when one suddenly comes across it and the rush of waters from various angles, the beauty of the scene, among those partly ruined buildings, water-mills and dwelling-houses, cannot be described.

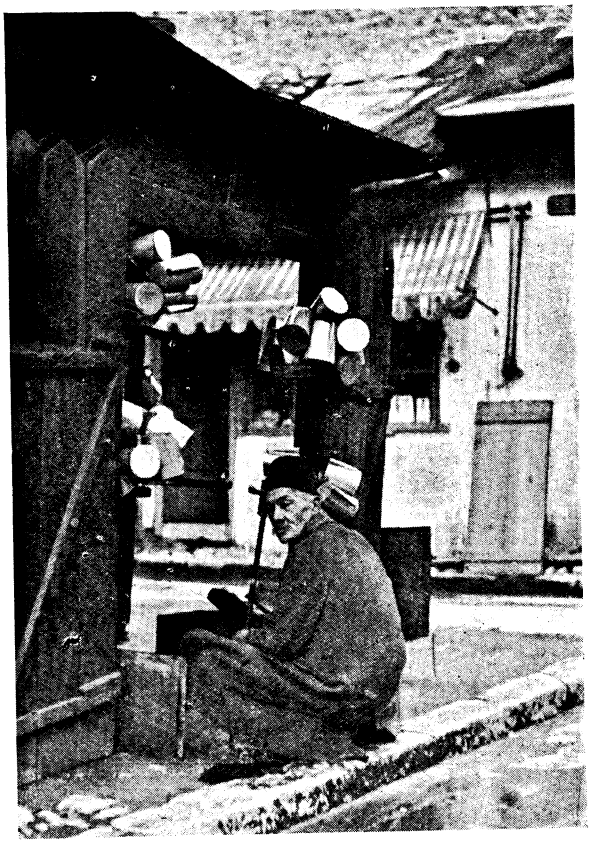
Descending from the stony wastes of Herzegovina, where every little patch of earth seems to be cultivated and fields that are a mere jumble of rock are divided from one another, for some obscure purpose, by stone walls—descending from that barren region you arrive at last at Dubrovnik, as the Yugoslavs now call Ragusa, Dubrovnik being the ancient Slav name. A recent article in *The Times* said that the view of the town from the adjacent island of Lacroma is the most beautiful in Europe, and this is probably correct. Between the mountains and the blue Adriatic, lying amid cypresses and pines, there is this lovely old Republic of Ragusa, which was a republic until Napoleon came. Encircled by a dream-like, fortified battlement of the Middle Ages, the city has preserved intact a great number of famous buildings, although one can walk in a few minutes from one end of it to the other. The Franciscan Church, which is reputed to have been founded by the Saint himself, possesses a superb cloister with double pillars, a very rare feature and one that has caused this cloister to be depicted in many architectural books. The Rector's Palace with its magnificent staircase (now the Palace of the King of Yugoslavia), the venerable Dogana, where it must have been a pleasure to have one's luggage examined, the loggia, the charming shops, and so forth, make a stay in this town a delightful experience, while within easy reach lies historic Canossa with its giant plane trees and its famous wine. Away to the south of Ragusa stretches the road which leads round the fjord-like Bocche di Cattaro, from where, in forty-eight serpentines, there rises the road to Montenegro. Our King George once told Prince George of Serbia that he had never in the course of his travels seen a more splendid spectacle than the view from this road, which extends over the whole of the Bocche, the mountains to the



CARRYING WATER IN A DALMATIAN TOWN.

west and the glittering Adriatic in the distance.

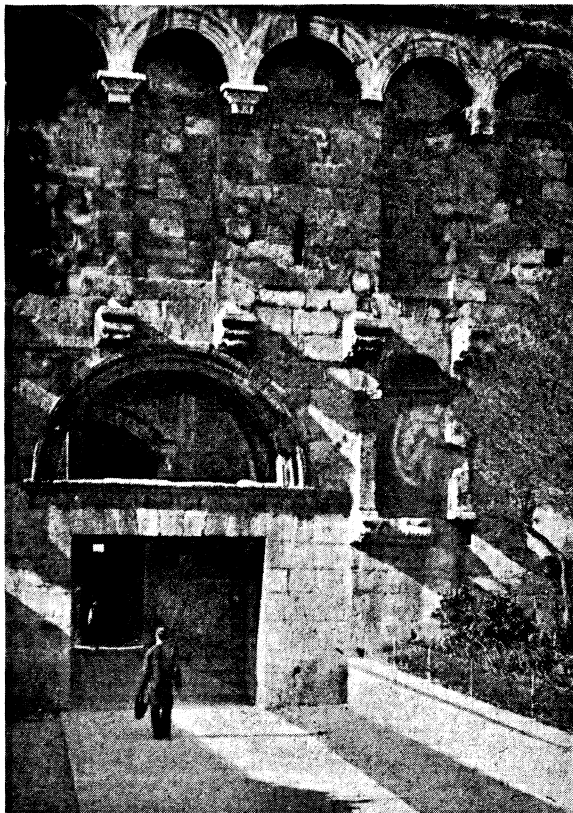
Some of us went from Dubrovnik by sea and some by car, a journey of about ten hours, to Spalato, the present capital of Dalmatia. The most interesting portion of the land route is that in the neighbourhood of Metkovitch, an inland town that is reached by steamers which sail up the Narenta. For miles around Metkovitch, a town that clings to the sides of a sudden hill, there is a curious landscape of fields and water that appear to lie in each other's arms. The marshes have given Metkovitch a bad hygienic reputation, although the chronicler Petter tells us that in 1843 there were in this district no fewer than eleven persons who were between 90 and 100 years of age, and since then the conditions have been improved. Certainly the population does not strike one as unhealthy looking—even the cows, who stand up to their waists in water and feed on the submerged grass, have a comely appearance. To pass from one stretch of water to another the native takes his fragile boat, the " Zoppolo " (hewn out of the trunk of a pine-tree), upon his shoulder. These boats are used for the transport of hay and corn, as also for the pursuit of water-birds, which are particularly numerous in January, February and March. In addition to the eagle and the white-headed vulture, one finds pelicans, wild swans, sea-gulls, snipe and wild ducks, the latter of which frequently engage in combat with the falcon. The duck agitates the water so violently with its wings that the falcon, in fright, abandons its prey and goes off with empty claws.



A MUHAMMEDAN SHOPKEEPER IN BOSNIA.

There are few real Turks nowadays in Bosnia, but the descendants of the Slavs, who were forcibly converted in the Middle Ages, array themselves in Turkish garments. Their language is that of the Christians of Yugoslavia, the Serbo-Croatian.

Even those who travel hurriedly through Yugoslavia bring back with them an almost overwhelming store of memories. In Spalato, now called Spljet or Split, one is in a town unique in the world, for it is built inside and outside the palace of the Emperor Diocletian, who came here to spend the remaining years of his life and with the intention of being buried in his luxurious mausoleum, an octagonal structure which is now the cathedral. Diocletian, on a visit to Italy, was murdered by his soldiers, and his body was never brought back to Spalato. A few miles to the north is the delightful little town of Trogir, among fig-trees and tamarisks. Here the Venetians erected their houses as if for eternity, so formidable they are and so close together. The most celebrated building is the cathedral, whose main portal, with its Adam and Eve, its lions, and other decorations, was wrought by Radovan, a native artist, in the year 1240, and is probably the finest example of the romanesque in south-eastern Europe. A richly ornamented chapel inside the cathedral has the superb marble sarcophagus of John Orsini, who was Bishop of Trogir from 1062 to 1111. In this chapel are eleven apostles, the twelfth having been removed to the tower, where he has become an evangelist; one of the original four had been destroyed. Trogir, small as it is, contains a great deal of exquisite work—the Venetian arsenal, the



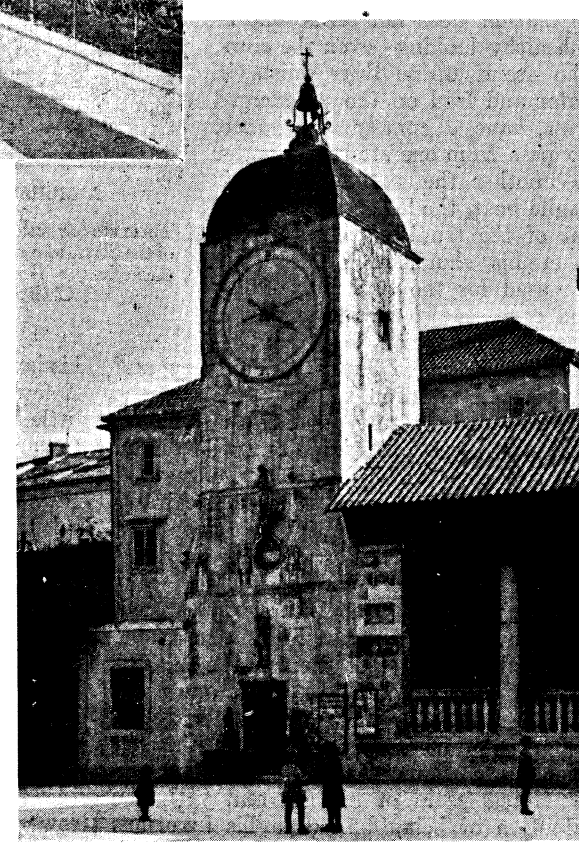
ONE OF THE ENTRANCES INTO SPLIT (SPALATO).

This extraordinary town on the Adriatic is built in and around the vast palace of the Emperor Diocletian.

loggia and the dwelling-houses. The statutes of old Trogir were written down 600 years ago in three books, which give us a good idea of how the citizens lived. Nobody was allowed to go out after nightfall without a light, the town-doctor was fined 25 lire if he left the place without permission, the saleswomen in the loggia were not allowed to spin; if a servant robbed his master his nose was cut off, and for other thefts one was liable to lose an eye if the value of the object was not more than 25 lire. If it exceeded this, then the culprit was " hung for so long until he died."

In rather more than an hour from Trogir we reached Sebenico, the harbour of which can only be gained through a long narrow passage. But the harbour itself is one of the most spacious in the world. Nevertheless it is again the cathedral that one chiefly remembers, for the stone roof—which only for the last sixty years, as a precaution, has been spanned from side to side with iron bars—is unrivalled anywhere.

The last town that we visited was Zara, and this involved a certain amount of telephoning and telegraphing, because after the War this one town, formerly the capital of Dalmatia with 35,000 inhabitants, was bestowed upon Italy. This enclave in Yugoslavia is not in a very happy condition; its population has sunk to 7,000. There are no industries except the making of maraschino and of cigarettes, which are smuggled into the surrounding country. But the



CLOCK-TOWER AND LOGGIA OF THE CHARMING LITTLE ADRIATIC TOWN OF TROGIR.

Yugoslav excise officials are chosen for their marksmanship, and many smugglers have been shot.

We were obliged to leave our cars at a farm in the neutral territory, which forms a semi-circle round the town. Other cars were waiting for us, and the three miles to Zara were speedily traversed. By the way, the town's water-supply is beyond the neutral territory, in Yugoslavia, so that in case of hostilities between Yugoslavia and Italy its position would be quite untenable. There is in the empty harbour a crane that was brought over from Italy some time ago, but it has as yet never raised a cargo out of a boat, so that the people assert that it was meant to raise the morale of the stricken town.

There is a good deal to be seen in the churches and the museum—for instance, the finest collection of Roman glass in existence, and from the Stone Age a wonderful fish-hook of stone, to say nothing of Saint Simeon's silver sarcophagus and the stone one that it replaced—but Zara is such an unhappy little town that what one most of all remembers are not the mediæval and ancient glories.

OTHER PEOPLE'S HUSBANDS.

OTHER people's husbands,
They visit you by stealth.
They talk about their wealth,
They talk about their health,
Do other people's husbands.

Other people's husbands,
They turn from health to praise.
They say, "I like your ways."
They pause, and sadly gaze,
Do other people's husbands.

Other people's husbands,
They're never understood.
Their wives are all so good,
And yet—misunderstood
Are other people's husbands.

Other people's husbands,
They say, "You are so wise."
They say, "I love your eyes."
They tell so many lies
Do other people's husbands!

Other people's husbands
Are just a lot of boys
Who want forbidden toys.
I'm very fond of boys,
But—I'm tired of other people's husbands!

EVE STRETTON.

HORACE BREAKS OUT

By A. M. BURRAGE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

HORACE LIVINGSTONE SHORT had arrived some two years since at that age when the Hand and Heart Insurance Company was wont to send its faithful employees into pensioned retirement. Horace Short had been a servant of the Company ever since he was old enough to wear chokers, and the Company, exercising an elephantine memory, saw to it that he had his reward on the very day when it became due. Two of the directors shook hands with him and presented him with an elaborate dressing-case and a nice letter which he could show to his friends. Some of the clerks in his department subscribed and bought him a tantalus large enough to wring a united groan from every Temperance organisation in the country. Mrs. Short took charge of the tantalus, and found that it came in useful as a receptacle for pickled shallots.

The Shorts lived in a six-roomed villa called Monte Video in a suburb of Shoddington called Sunshine Park. They were just the sort of couple you would expect to find living at Sunshine Park in a villa called Monte Video. Horace had been on the retired list for less than a week when he discovered that his new freedom was no freedom at all. He was no more free than a galley slave who has been unshackled in order that he may be sold to the proprietor of a sugar plantation. Mrs. Short sustained the rôle of planter with a success which only fell short of true art because it came naturally to her.

Like all men who have been in the same business for many years, he found that what he had once called drudgery was really the breath of life to him. He was lost without it. And, like most small, timid men who have married large, domineering women, he played second fiddle in the orchestra of two. After thirty years of marriage he was still as terrified of his wife as he was on a certain memorable morning when, in church, she had promised to obey him.

Mrs. Short was a tall and weighty lady who might have served a comic artist as a model for the traditional Mrs. Henpeck of English humour. Her hair was iron-grey, and she wore it as the tower of a cathedral might wear a storm-cloud. Her bust was massive, and rigidly supported by hidden buttresses of steel and whalebone. These creaked when she was angry, which was not seldom.

She was not often actively unkind to Horace, but she took charge of his life like an extra, and more than ordinarily remorseless, Fate. She looked after him as if he were a small boy who might be liable to tear his clothes or annoy the neighbours. She made him run errands for her and set him to do odd jobs about the house and about the garden; and she persuaded herself and others, and almost Horace himself, that amateur gardening and house decorating were his hobbies. And of course she took charge of their united finances and doled him out inadequate pocket money. After two years of pottering about the house and pottering about the garden, Horace Short had become a chronic potterer.

On a certain fine spring morning he was in the back garden encouraging some early wallflowers with a watering-can. The watering-can held no more than a pint and a half, but this, as his wife pointed out, gave him plenty of exercise in going to and from the scullery to refill it. On one of those many expeditions he heard above the rushing of the tap his wife's voice from one of the front rooms, summoning him. He abandoned the watering-can and trotted off obediently, to find her in the drawing-

room, holding a large pair of scissors lengthwise between her teeth, just as old-time pirates held their daggers while swarming up the sides of merchantmen. By her side an arm-chair was doing its best to stand on its head.

"Horace," said Mrs. Short, speaking over and under the scissors.

"Yes, my dear?"

"That's the second pipe you've smoked this morning."

"Yes, my dear. But the first one wasn't very full."

Mrs. Short frowned.

"Well, put it away now, and go and put on your other coat. I want you to go down to Shane and Saunders in the High Street and match this material for me. I find I shall want two more yards to finish the chair-covers. I didn't get quite enough. I bought the material there, so they're sure to be able to match it, but mind they *do*. Come back as quickly as you can. You'd better take a tram both ways, as I'm in a hurry. Here's the pattern."

She handed him a piece of chintz of a design which looked as if somebody had been playing snooker pool with oranges on a table with a pink cloth. Mrs. Short was re-covering the chairs and chesterfield after a fashion which lacked nothing of boldness.

Horace obediently took the pattern, changed his garden coat for a neat grey one which matched his trousers, and returned for the money. Mrs. Short knew exactly how much he would have to pay for the chintz, and doled him out that amount, plus threepence for his return tramway fare. Amid further exhortations to hasten he took his departure, looking like a neat but elderly city sparrow.

The day was sunny and very warm for the time of the year. Having reached the nearest point on the tramway system, Horace Short decided to ride on top. The surface of the wooden seat was quite warm where the sun had struck it, and he sat down conscious that spring was in the air, and that for quite a number of people the world must be an extremely pleasant place.

Vaguely he was aware that on such a morning the pulses of the world beat a little faster for the kiss of Romance. Behind the façades of the little houses along the way—all so terribly like Monte Video—young girls dreamed over their housework of young men who would call for them in the evening and take them to cinema palaces, or walk with them under the moon in open spaces where the breath of the wind was sweetened by far-off country scents. Love and Youth were still dancing to the same measure which he had danced to as a boy; only he had wearied long since and could only stand by and watch and hum the tune. Very idly and innocently he dreamed of high adventure and the honeyed lips of the Golden Girl, and became most absurdly the hero of his dreams, pretending that his youth had been given back to him by a sort of virtuous Mephistopheles, who had at the same time provided for Mrs. Short a private limbo containing all reasonable comforts.

The train of thoughts was held together by such gossamer threads that the jolting of the tram in taking a corner was sufficient to shake them into the vanishing dust of dreams. Other dreams, material and commonplace but almost as unattainable, sprang out of the fertile soil of the little man's mind. The unusual warmth of the sun, abetted by his labours in the garden, had made him thirsty. To write the plain truth baldly and uncompromisingly, Horace Short felt that he wanted a glass of beer.

He had never had the desire or the opportunity to drink much, but there were often times when he had enjoyed a glass of beer, and still more times when he would have enjoyed one had the means and the occasion coincided. It had not been so difficult while he was still at the office. He had been able to juggle with his luncheon money and treat himself to occasional half-pints by depriving himself of sweets or cheese. Nowadays it was a rare and highly prized luxury, to be encountered only at the tables of his friends. He remembered wistfully cold supper at the Simpsons' on the previous Sunday, when Simpson had produced bottles of light dinner ale. After one glass Mrs. Short had interposed: "Don't give Horace any more; it will get into his head." He had submitted to discipline and taken his disappointment philosophically. Things like that were always happening.

It must not be supposed that he was for one moment tempted to embezzle any of the money entrusted to him for the purchase of the chintz. That would have been too monumental a crime, from which his soul shrank as the souls of ordinary sinners shrink from the thought of murder. But he had three halfpence of his very own, and needed only three halfpence more to buy half a pint of the cheapest synthetic swipes concocted by a local firm of chemists who called

themselves brewers. He had a further three halfpence for his return fare on the tram, which, if thus illicitly used, would provide him with the exact necessary sum. He could walk home very quickly and perhaps get away with only a comparatively mild scolding by telling dear Emma that it had taken the shop assistant a very long time to match the chintz. The matter under consideration resolved itself into a kind of mathematics. Did half a pint of beer equal a two-miles' walk, plus three halfpence, plus being told the usual home untruths ?

The problem was still unsolved when he got off the tram. He had some little way to walk, for the High Street was too narrow to accommodate trams, having sprung up in an unenlightened age which failed to foresee our modern and graceful means of transport. On the principle that business came first, Horace went to the shop and bought the chintz, which, as he was already assured, came to the exact sum which Mrs. Short had given him for that purpose. He emerged with threepence in his pocket, still thirsty and undecided. Fifty yards distant the King's Head, that prince of local taverns, menaced his line of retreat from the left flank. If he could pass it he was safe to reach the trams with his fare and his original three halfpence intact. It was still a toss-up.

He had not taken a dozen steps when he became aware of a young man standing hatless in the middle of the pavement, looking anxiously up and down. The young man was very carefully dressed in a dark suit, and a carnation in his buttonhole conspired with his immaculate grooming to give him a strikingly festal air. His blue eyes met and held the gaze of the approaching Horace, even as the tiresome old mariner hypnotised the late Mr. Coleridge. The analogy is not altogether false, for although Mr. Jack Sawyer was no sailor, and had never in his life shot an albatross with a crossbow, Horace Short was about to be a wedding guest, although just then he knew nothing about it. Young Jack Sawyer addressed Horace Short in a tone at once ingratiating and apologetic.

" Excuse me, sir. I wonder if you would be so very kind as to do me a favour. It need not take you more than a minute."

" With pleasure, sir," replied Horace, with equal courtesy, " so long as it is within my power."

The young man waved his hand towards a door which stood open at the top of a flight of stone steps behind him. His smile became a little sheepish.

" The fact is," he said, " that I am waiting to get married. My fiancée is inside. But I forgot all about getting witnesses. We have kidnapped one, and now we want another. If you would be so very obliging——"

Horace's eyes danced. In the rough-and-ready language of his thoughts he told himself that the perfect thing was about to happen. It was surely a day made for marriages, with the air like subtly heated wine and Youth calling to Youth in every whisper of the breeze. The thought seemed to add perfection to the already perfect morning.

" Why, with pleasure," he said, smiling broadly. " I shall be most charmed."

" I say, thanks most awfully," gobbled the young man. " This way, then, if you don't mind. After you. The condemned cell is straight down the passage."

Horace found himself in an aggressively clean hall, paved and surrounded by white doors panelled in glazed glass, with neat black letters on the glaze. One of the doors opened and disclosed a very young and pretty girl clad in some kind of pale fawn material. To Horace she looked no more than a child as she waved excitedly to his companion. Jack Sawyer waved back.

" All right, darling, I've got somebody. This is Mr.—er—I forgot to ask your name. Mr.—er—my wife—or she will be in about two minutes. Come on, sir. ' Now we shan't be long '—as the poet Swinburne says somewhere in ' Atalanta.' "

Waiting in the office beside the registrar's desk was a rheumy-eyed and veteran fragment of the streets who subsequently signed himself Alf Kebbins, and who was plainly in a hurry to get the business done and drink the inevitable tip. The registrar completed the party. He was a little dried-up man, impassive as a joss, who looked as if he might dissolve at any moment into a mound of snuff-coloured powder. He proceeded forthwith to marry the happy couple with a cynical and practised air.

While the business transaction, miscalled a ceremony, was taking place, Horace glanced covertly at the girl bride. Would she ever, he wondered, become an Emma ? And forty years hence would that nice boy, while toddling out to obey one of her commands, meet another bride and groom, and envy them . . . and remember . . .

and wonder? It seemed unthinkable, but life had taught him the possibility of all improbable things.

It was all very swiftly done. Strange that the shackles could be so swiftly forged, although, to be sure, they seemed but daisy chains at first. The register was signed and Jack Sawyer turned and kissed his wife. Mr. Kebbins, who was in a hurry, uttered a smothered and alcoholic cough by way of a hint. Jack Sawyer proceeded to get rid of him, and handed him a ten-shilling note.

"Thanks very much," he said. "This squares you, I think. Don't waste it on food."

While the registrar was making out the certificate Horace chatted with the newly married couple in a corner of the room, where, his name having been disclosed, he was introduced more formally to the bride. He made them a little speech which he had composed while the knot was being tied.

"I offer you both my sincerest congratulations—particularly you, my dear sir. Madam, I wish you great happiness. A long life to both and no troubles. It has been a very great pleasure to me to assist, even in the smallest capacity, on this great occasion."

They both laughed politely and thanked him.

"And now," said Jack Sawyer, "when this Johnny's done ruling the marriage lines you must come along and lunch with us, Mr. Short."

"Oh, thank you very much," protested Horace, shrinking. "But I couldn't. I couldn't really."

"Oh, but you must!" exclaimed the new Mrs. Sawyer, giving him an adorable look. In her eyes he was some bright-winged ambassador of Cupid thinly disguised as a plain, grey, elderly little man.

What would Emma say!

"But I can't. Really, I can't. Besides, I'm sure you young people don't want any company."

"Oh, but we do!" Jack Sawyer assured him. "You see, for reasons which I will explain later, you'll be the only guest, and we must have at least one. A wedding breakfast *à deux* simply isn't done. It's been a pretty scratchy kind of wedding, and Jennie won't feel that she's properly married unless we have somebody to share the feast."

"Isn't it much too early for din—er—lunch?" Horace suggested.

The bride consulted her wrist-watch.

"It is a bit," she admitted, "but I'm sure if we ask him nicely Uncle Short won't mind waiting. You don't mind our adopting you as an uncle, do you? I'm sure you make a lovely uncle."

"I'd like you to think of me as an uncle," said Horace, expanding like a flower in the sun. "But really I can't stay to lunch with you. Really, I can't. I've got a—an engagement."

Their faces fell, and it flattered him to see that they really wanted his company. Why, they could scarcely have said, except that they were so happy themselves that they wanted to make happy this queer and nice little man whom Fate had tossed into their orbit on this auspicious occasion.

"All right," said the groom, "then I'll tell you what. He simply can't refuse us this. Uncle'll come along with us and drink a glass of champagne. Won't you, Uncle?"

Champagne! A few minutes since he had been scheming to buy himself a glass of beer. Not that he wouldn't have preferred beer, but there is something hypnotic about the very word Champagne. He had tasted it only once or twice in his life, and remembered not having liked it very much. To him it was a wine which one drank in order to boast of having drunk it. There was an opulent, even an aristocratic, flavour in the word. And although he remembered thinking that it was a greatly overrated beverage, he also remembered that it had produced a highly agreeable after-effect.

He could not make up his mind to accept the invitation, but they had made up their minds, and when the business with the registrar was concluded, they hustled him out, afterwards linking arms with him on the pavement, laughing, half jostling, and treating him as if they had known him from early childhood. There seemed to him an element of agreeable madness in the air. He went with them like a swimmer caught by an irresistible tide and being hurried towards the shores of some happy island. He was light-headed already, and no fit recipient for the heady juice of the grape.

The new Mrs. Sawyer was half shouting across at her young husband.

"What were you thinking of while we were being married? I simply couldn't think of *anything*. My head was simply *buzzing*. What were you thinking of, Uncle?"

"I was thinking how young you look for twenty-one," he answered simply.

The bride put a gloved finger to her laughing mouth.

"Ssh!" she whispered. "Forget it, Uncle."

Horace Short was not generally quick of comprehension, but in a flash he understood why there were no wedding guests, and why the necessary witnesses had to be called in from the street.

"O—oh!" he exclaimed. "You bad, wicked children!"

"Not a word!" said Jack Sawyer.

"Oh, Uncle wouldn't dream of giving us away," said Jennie Sawyer, squeezing his arm. "Darling Uncle!"

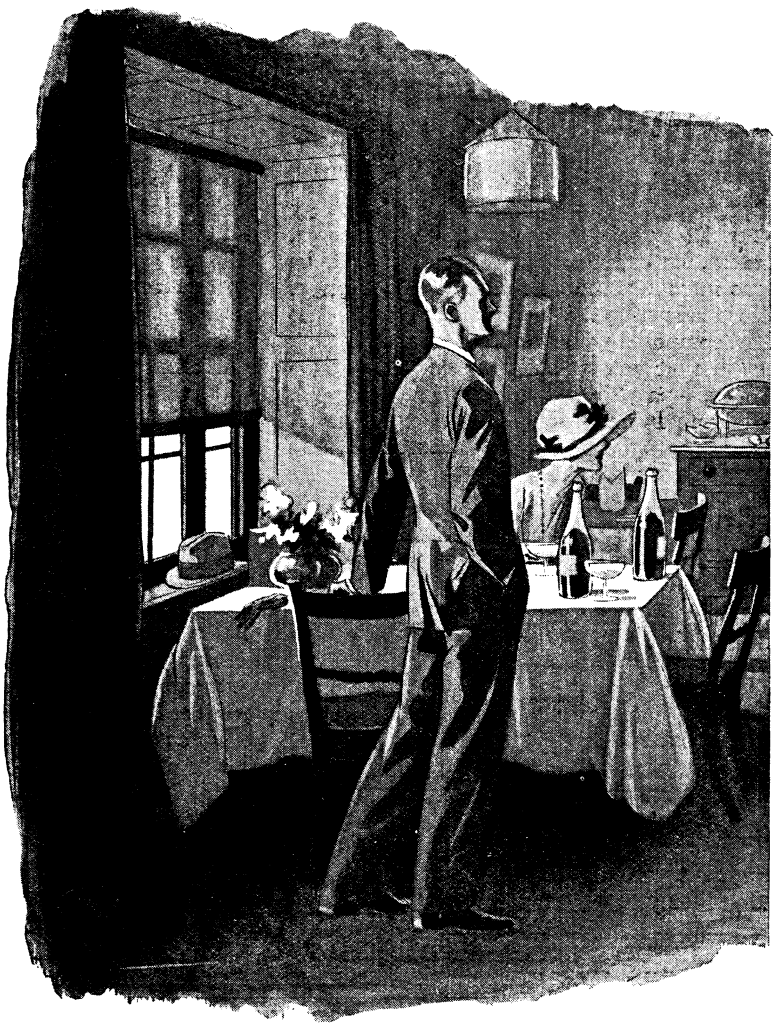
What a morning! And who said Romance was dead? How could he have dreamed when he set out that he was to assist at a runaway, or at least a secret wedding, that he was to drink champagne, and that the prettiest girl that ever laughed her way into a man's life on a spring morning was to call him Darling Uncle?

At the King's Head they had the coffee-room to themselves, and Jack Sawyer, in asking for the wine-list, actually wrung a smile from the grim old waiter, who had long since achieved the reputation of King Henry the First of England.

"Let's see," he said presently, glancing down the list. "I s'pose 1919's about the best we can do. You've got a sweet and uneducated tooth, haven't you, Jennie darling? Hope you don't mind if the fizz isn't too dry, Uncle?"

"Thank you, I prefer it wet," said Horace obligingly.

They insisted that he had meant it for a joke and that it was a very good one, and even the old waiter smiled again as he went to execute the order. Two minutes later the pale liquor was creaming in the glasses. Horace and Jack Sawyer raised theirs simultaneously.



"To Jennie," said the young bridegroom.

"To the bride, God bless her," said Horace, and then: "To both of you."

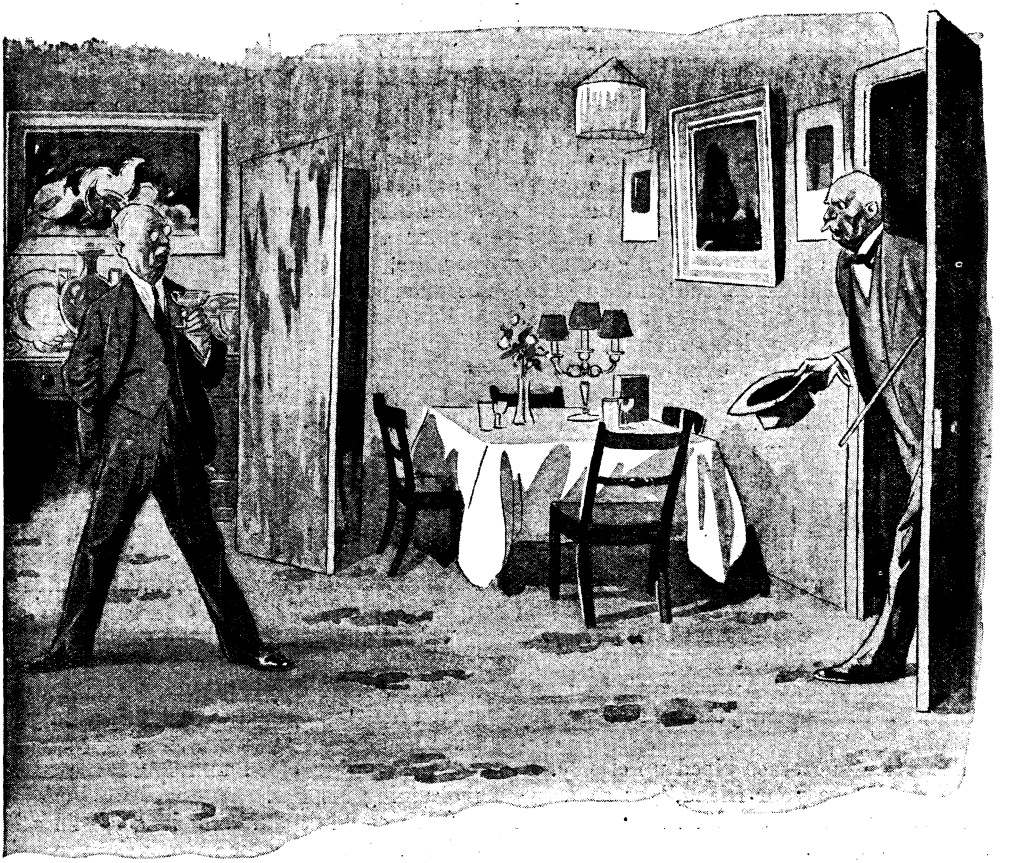
He drank, conscious first of all of an invisible spray which tickled his lips and nostrils. It was a ceremonial drink, and for that reason he was able to persuade himself that he really liked it. The bottle passed again, but it missed Jennie, who laughingly confessed that she wasn't used to it. Horace drank again, and was surprised and pleased

to find that the bright aspect of everything around him had become suddenly even brighter.

The room was in shadow, for the blinds were drawn, but Horace was conscious of much sunlight. He smiled benignantly on the bride and groom, and began to hum under his breath one of the popular songs of his boyhood. It was a long time since he had hummed anything. He felt years younger. Really, it was astonishing how

Boy and the Bloodhound. No, perhaps better not. On second thoughts, certainly better not. Emma had told him that it was broad, and Emma was a judge of such things. Well, something else then. He could not sing, for there was no piano. Besides, Emma had told him that he hadn't any voice. Not that he considered Emma any judge of singing. Who was Emma, anyway?

Horace leaned forward confidentially.



"There appeared in the doorway a very large man in a light grey check suit. His eyes were bulging, and his face was the colour of a freshly painted pillar-box."

full of vitality and high spirits he suddenly felt. There was poor old Emma, waiting at home for beastly chintz. Well, let her wait! It would do her good for a change. Anyhow, she'd better not say anything to *him*. . . . He was a Man, wasn't he? Well, then!

He felt that he ought to do something to entertain his host and hostess, and wondered if perhaps he could tell them that old story of his father's about the Rabbit, the Errand

"I don't know if I told you about the last time I had a fight?" he began.

Jennie gave a faint convulsive heave.

"No, Uncle, you didn't," she said very seriously.

"It was with a sergeant of the Life Guards in one of those London night clubs," Horace continued reflectively. "But perhaps I'd better not tell you about it."

"Oh, go on, Uncle," Jack Sawyer urged. "Why not?"

Horace fixed him with a glittering eye.

"It's a painful memory. You see, I had to wait three days before I found out for certain that the man was going to recover. Of course, I was a younger man then, so——"

He was interrupted by sudden sounds from without—such sounds as old-fashioned stage directions would have described as alarums and excursions. A Voice spoke. It was the kind of Voice which might proceed from a large Jersey bull if such an animal could be taught to speak. It said:

"Get out of the way. I know they're in here. The man on point duty told me."

The bride turned white and the groom turned pink. Horace glanced towards the door with a faint air of annoyance, such as might become a musical archbishop who hears a choir-boy singing out of tune. It seemed likely that some noisy and unpleasant person was about to spoil a good story about himself which he was even then in the process of inventing. There appeared in the doorway a very large man in a light grey check suit. His eyes were bulging, and his face was the colour of a freshly painted pillar-box. The bulging eyes focussed themselves upon the bridal pair.

"Ah!" he said.

"Father," said the bride faintly.

The large man strode towards the little group.

"What are you doing here?" he shouted. "Didn't I forbid you ever to see this young pup again? Our family isn't good enough for his!" This with a heavy sneer. "As for you, Sawyer, I thought I warned you what would happen if you didn't leave my girl alone."

The voice of Horace piped up clearly.

"I don't like your friend," he said.

The big man bestowed on him one swift withering glance.

"Champagne, heh!" he exclaimed. "Yes, you can afford champagne! You come along with me, Jennie, at once."

"Don't you, Jennie," said Horace. Really it was extraordinary how angry he felt with this big blustering man who was spoiling everything. He had never felt like swashbuckling before, but he felt very much like it now.

"Mind your own business, sir," snapped the big man. "Who are you?"

Horace stood up. There was quite a dangerous glitter in his eye.

"I'll show you who I am," he said, vaguely but darkly. "And I know who *you* are. You're a pompous old porpoise. That's what you are—a pompous old porpoise."

The impromptu phrase seemed to Horace a very happy one, and he repeated it three more times. The large man gave him another glance of contempt and then glared at the bride.

"Come, Jennie," he said sternly, "you're in low company."

"We all are—now you've come in," said Horace, felicitously he thought. He certainly drew attention upon himself.

"Be so good as to hold your tongue, sir! I am addressing my daughter."

"I don't believe it," Horace retorted, slightly nettled. "Prove it! *She's* not a pompous porpoise, so how could she have a pompous porpoise for a father?" Having asked the unanswerable, Horace disdained a further appeal to biology. "And even if you are," he continued, "you can't come between husband and wife."

For perhaps the first and only time in his life Horace produced a really dramatic effect. The large man went back a step, and his face assumed a really dangerous hue.

"*What?*" he shouted.

"It's true, Mr. Purvis," said the bridegroom, with a faint quaver in his voice. "We were married half an hour ago. Show him the certificate, Jennie."

An awful calm seemed suddenly to possess Mr. Purvis. His manner became so intense that he almost whispered.

"Then this is a bad day's work for you, Jack Sawyer. You know her age as well as I do. Not nineteen yet. This means prison for you, and, my word, to prison you shall go!"

Jack Sawyer stood and faced the man, moistening his lips.

"We couldn't wait any longer," he said quietly. "Sending me to prison won't help matters. We're man and wife. Nothing can alter that. But of course if you wish to ruin our lives, you can."

"Ruin your lives! You can't even keep her!" He turned to Horace in his extremity. "Do you know what he does for a living? He buys bad second-hand cars, makes 'em worse, and then sells 'em at a loss. *That's* what he does for a living."

"Pompous old porpoise," said Horace to the room in general.

The bride's father turned on him in a flame.

"If you say that again," he roared, "I'll——"

"Yes," said Horace, threateningly, "what'll you do? I'll call you a pompous old porpoise as many times as I like, because you *are* a pompous old porpoise. *Isn't* he a pompous old porpoise? Don't you worry, my boy. He isn't going to send you to prison. He'll have to reckon with me first."

A dread for little Horace's safety overcame Jack Sawyer. He knew his new father-in-law.

"Here!" he cried warningly. "Steady on, Uncle."

gasp of admiration. "Bless you, my children!"

"But you wrote and told me——"

Horace's unusually sharpened faculties made him suddenly aware that the game was in his hands.

"Can't I change my mind?" he demanded.

"He wouldn't be here, would he," the bride said mildly, "if he hadn't forgiven us?"

"And if you'd only do the same, Mr.



"'You couldn't have troubled to see what they gave you. Look! Only just *look*! Are you blind, or do you think this matches *that*?'"

Purvis stared at Horace with a new amazement.

"Uncle!" he repeated. "You're not —you can't be Sir Reginald Sawyer!"

"Oh, can't I!" said Horace truculently. He liked titles and was rather fond of the name Reginald.

Purvis passed a hand across his forehead.

"Then—then, Sir Reginald, you're just as much averse to this disastrous match as I am."

"Averse? Rot! Rubbish!" Horace turned and smiled at the bridal couple, from whom he had failed to head a united

Purvis," said Jack Sawyer ingratiatingly, "you'd give everybody a lot of happiness."

Purvis sat down heavily.

"Of course, Sir Reginald," he said in a greatly altered tone, "that changes the aspect of affairs. I wish you'd been good enough to write to me again when you changed your mind."

It was undoubtedly Horace's morning. He had an answer ready for everything.

"I hate writing letters," he said loftily.

"Nevertheless . . . of course, I'm gratified that my daughter should enter your family with your permission. It was your withholding it which—er—you see, I have

my pride. Nevertheless, I have my rights as a father, and I wish you had acquainted me with your change of view. However!"

"That's all right, then," said Horace, beaming upon the bride and bridegroom.

Purvis looked doubtful for a moment.

"I understand, Sir Reginald, that this young man has expectations from you."

"Heaps," Horace agreed cheerfully. "Lots. Any amount of expectations." He had to be very careful how he said Expectations. It was a tricky word.

Purvis hesitated. Then he turned to Jack Sawyer.

"Very well," he said simply.

"You give your consent?" the young man asked.

"Yes—in the circumstances. There's no sense in sending you to prison."

There was a pause, broken at last by Horace.

"We'd like that in writing, Mr.—um—ah—Purvis," he said with a grave air of suspicion. "All business tr-transactions must be done in writing. When I was in the ins—when I was a younger man——"

"Oh, very well," said Purvis, very tamely and quietly; and took a notebook and a fountain-pen from his pocket.

Presently he rose, thrust a loose sheet of paper into Jack Sawyer's hand, and glanced towards the door.

"You'll excuse me for a few minutes," he said. "I must go to the bank. There's the question of a wedding present, I suppose."

WHEN Horace found himself on the top of a tram on his way home he was conscious of an approaching headache. But his eyes were still moist with laughter, for there had been five minutes of hysterical mirth in the coffee-room before the Sawyers had urged the necessity for his retirement while the bride's father was still absent. He had been embraced both by the bride and the bridegroom, and the bride had given him four big kisses. In his waistcoat pocket he carried on a scrap of paper an address to which he had promised to write; and when they had a home of their own he was to come and see them whenever he liked, for he was to go on being their uncle for ever and ever. It was not until he saw things in the cold light of reason that he thought how awkward it would be if one of his visits coincided with one of Purvis's.

The cold light of reason was now returning. His heart was heavy with dread lest he had done something to put him within reach of the law. His conscience had not yet regained its poise and he was not sure if he had done well or ill. But even had he done wrong he was prepared secretly to glory in it. He had fought on the side of Youth and Romance, and all the things worth having in life which had so long gone past him. And for the first time in his narrow, thwarted little life he had had his hour.

He found his Emma awaiting him. Her hair looked more than ever like a storm-cloud and there was thunder on her brow. Her stays were creaking with the resentment which boiled inside. She had been kept waiting for her chintz for an hour longer than she deemed reasonable, and she said so in a few well-chosen words while she unfolded the thin brown paper. Then her indignation boiled over.

"You're just like a great child!" she exclaimed. "I can't trust you to go anywhere or do the simplest thing. You couldn't have troubled to see what they gave you. Look! Only just *look*! Are you blind, or do you think this matches *that*?"

Horace Short wilted before the basilisk stare.

"I'm very sorry, my dear," he said mildly. "Don't be angry. I didn't do it on purpose. Don't upset yourself. I can go back and change it. I'm very sorry, my dear—I'll go now."

The effects of the champagne had worn off.

BATH SONG.

POACH the egg and fry the bacon,
Put the kettle on to boil;
See that every care be taken
Lest the sausages should spoil,
And let seasonable fishes
Decorate the other dishes.

Bring the bread and bring the platter,
Marmalade and all its kin;
Bring all other forms of matter
That can fill the void within,
While I shout with all my might,
Working up an appetite.

ROBERT BELL.

TO RETURN TO ALPHONSE

By RICHMAL CROMPTON

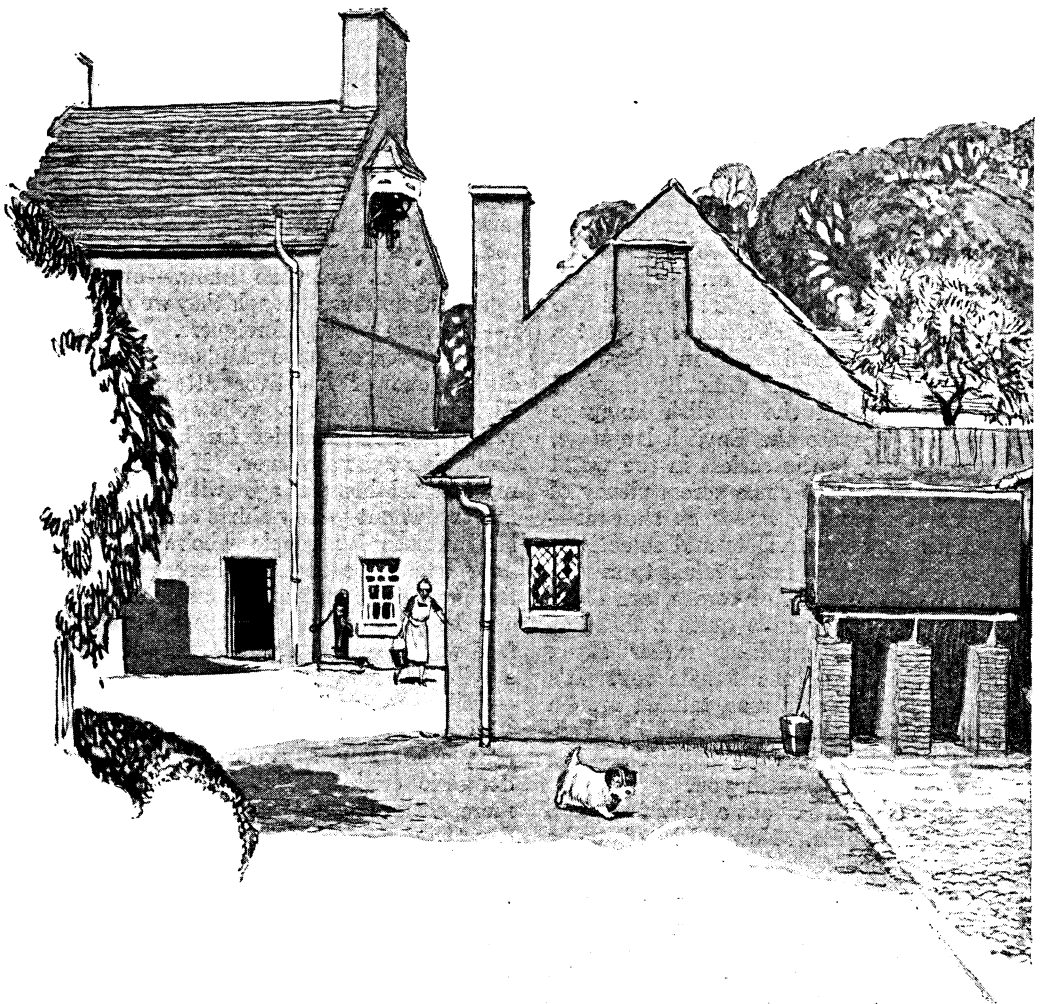
ILLUSTRATED BY L. G. ILLINGWORTH

YES (said Pinkie), I can see that little Alphonse now—not very tall, but spick and span and all cleaned up every minute of the day. A Frenchman he said he was, and he may have been, for all I know. He was a foreigner, anyway, and that was enough for me. They're all the same, are foreigners. I've never yet met a foreigner that wasn't inferior in every way to an Englishman. The difficulty they all seem to find with the English language proves that, because the English language, as we all know, is the easiest in the world to speak. Well, I've come across plenty of foreigners during my career as shuvver—sometimes they were valets and sometimes secretaries—and I've never taken to any of them. Ladies' maids, of course, are often foreigners too, but that's quite a different matter. There's something rather sheek about foreigners of the female sex. It's curious that to hear a man talking broken English makes you want to smack his head, but a lady talking broken English inspires quite different feelings in you.

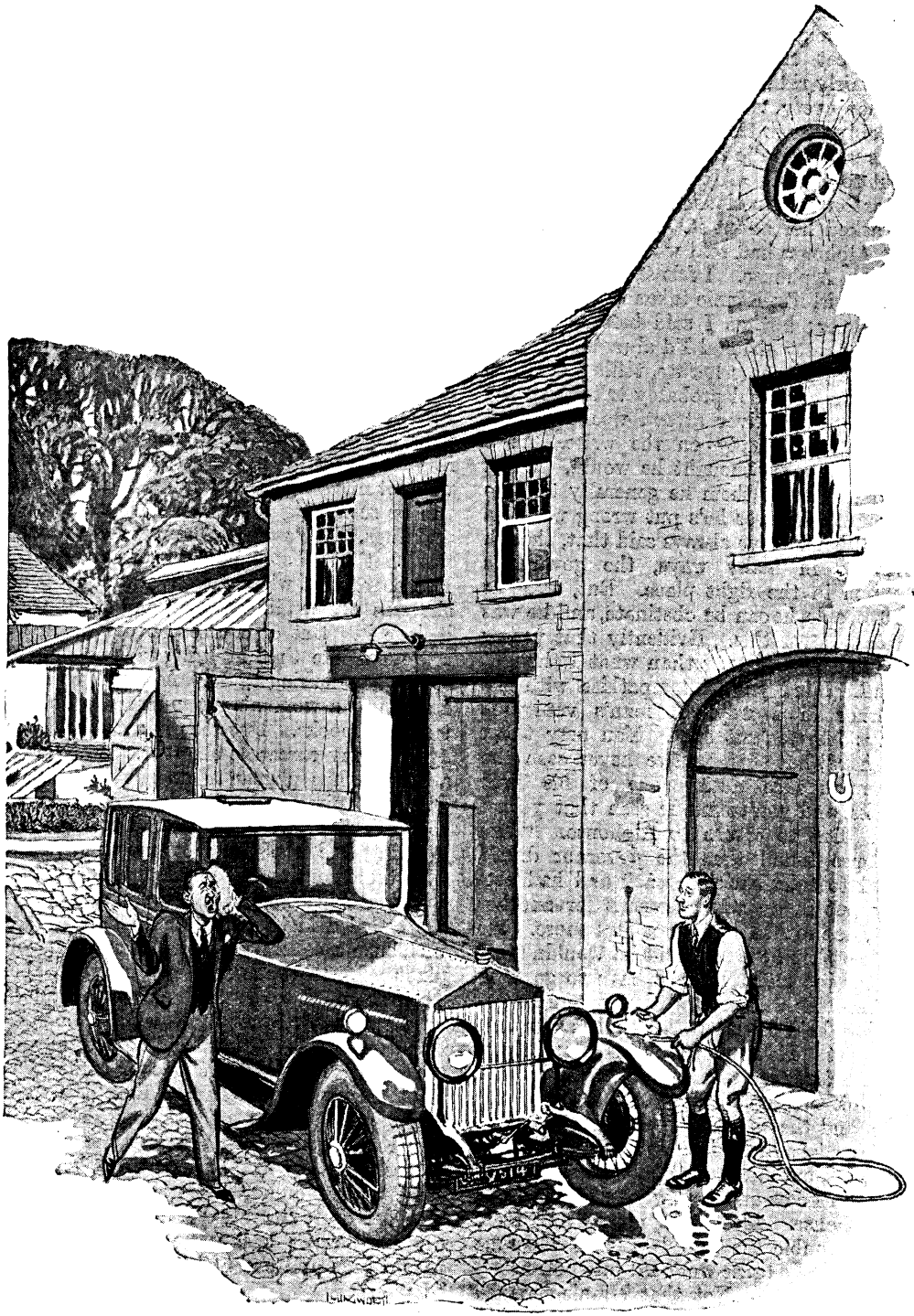
But this tale isn't about a lady foreigner. It's about Alphonse. Now I'd like it to be quite understood that for Alphonse himself I'd no feelings at all but those of scorn, same as I have for any other foreigner of the male sex. Mind you, I never think they're quite as stupid as they make out. They couldn't be, or they'd all be in asylums, where as a matter of fact most of 'em ought to be. But you don't tell me that a grown man of thirty or forty or so who's all right upstairs can't say simple little words like "what" or "why" or "the" if he tries. Of course not. Simply tryin' to insult the language most of them are, and that's why I can hardly keep my hands off them. But to return to Alphonse. As I said before, I never did like Alphonse, and when I heard that the governor had given him the sack I was rather glad than otherwise, because I hoped that it meant that the governor, same as me, had had enough of foreigners and was going to stick to Englishmen, one of whom, as everyone knows—even foreigners themselves, though they won't admit it—is worth twenty foreigners.

The governor gave Alphonse the sack during one of his liver attacks, because Alphonse put out a yellow shirt and a yellow silk hankerchief for him. Well, I don't blame the governor. If a valet hasn't reached Alphonse's age without learning not to put out yellow shirts and yellow silk hankerchiefs for people who're undergoin' liver attacks he ought to have. He'd seen the governor in his previous liver attacks and he knew just what the colour of his face was during them. As for putting out a yellow shirt and a yellow silk hankerchief—well, I wouldn't have done it myself, and I lay no claim to be any other sort of a valet than what any shuvver learns to be in domestic crisises. But I've certainly got more natural tact than that. In fact, the day the governor's attack came on, the day before Alphonse put out the yellow shirt and yellow silk hankerchief, I'd caught a glimpse of the governor's face through the window curtains and I'd gone back hasty to the garage to change the yellow roses in the vase in the car to pink ones. So I didn't feel much sympathy with Alphonse when he came out weepin' an' tellin' me all about the yellow shirt and hankerchief and how he'd got the sack. It's strange to me how these foreigners carry on. I've seen a foreigner burst into tears just because someone forgot to put sugar in his tea. That's a fact. Take it or leave it as you like. But to return to Alphonse. As I said, I took it quite calm when Alphonse

came down to the garage, the tears streaming down his face, and told me about the sack. I was washing the car at the time, so I just turned off the hose and asked him to come and stand over the other wing, as water was rather scarce and it seemed a pity to waste it. That's the only way to take foreigners. It sort of braces 'em. Sympathisin' with them only makes 'em worse. However, on this occasion Alphonse refused to be braced. He went on moanin' and weepin' and jabberin' away, and when he'd been doing it for about ten minutes I realised that there was a special reason why Alphonse didn't want to be given the sack, and that that reason was Minnie, the parlourmaid. Now this was a bit of a shock to me. Minnie was as nice and pretty a girl as you'd find from one end of England to the other. I wasn't surprised to find that Alphonse was sweet on her because, of course, he could never have found anything like Minnie in foreign parts. But it was a bit of a shock to me to gather from his bleatin's and moanin's that Minnie was sweet on him too, or, as the newspapers put it, that she reciprocated his affectations. That, I admit, *was* a bit of a shock to me. And leaving the governor meant leaving Minnie, because, of course, Minnie wouldn't throw up her job, and anyway Minnie's home was in the village, so she wouldn't want to go away from it. This pulled me up sharp and made me take the matter serious. I liked Minnie, and though I couldn't understand her being sweet on Alphonse, still, women aren't reasonable same as men are, and if she was really sweet on him I wanted her to have him.



I didn't, of course, take it gospel from



"As I said, I took it quite calm when Alphonse came down to the garage, the tears streaming down his face, and told me about the sack."

him that Minnie was sweet on him, because, being a foreigner, he'd think that all women were sweet on him. Foreigners are like that—fairly riddled with conceit and believing that every woman who looks at them (probably just to think what little guys they are) is ready to die for love of them.

But to return to Alphonse. I didn't take the matter quite serious till I'd found Minnie and asked her about it. It appeared that what Alphonse had said was true. She was sweet on Alphonse. I felt sad to see a nice English girl like Minnie taken that way over a foreigner; but, as I said before, she was a really pretty girl and I'd always liked her. So I tried to cheer her up, telling her that the governor would probably take back the sack when the liver attack was over and that it was already on the wane. As a matter of fact I thought he would. When he comes out of them he generally tries to put right whatever he's put wrong while he was in them. I've always said that, though irritating in many ways, the governor's heart is in the right place. But, same as most people, he can be obstinate, and he was obstinate over this. Evidently that yellow shirt had gone deeper than what I thought it had. Mind you, I sympathise with the governor in a way. A man's vanity is always his weakest spot. You may think him hard, but then you've never seen the governor's face during one of his liver attacks, and you've never seen that yellow shirt. But to return to Alphonse. When Alphonse found that the governor didn't intend to take back the sack and had actually put in an advertisement for another valet, he moaned and wept still more. He told me that he was afraid he wouldn't get another job and that he'd have to go back on the Halls. It seemed that before he got this job he'd been on the Halls as a ventriloquist. He'd never told us that before, because for some reason or other he seemed to think that it was very low to be on the Halls and that a valet's job was several up in the social scale. I shouldn't have thought so myself, but foreigners of course have queer ideas. I knew one once who—but to return to Alphonse. Alphonse's moans and tears didn't trouble me at all—except when he cried over the brass-work I'd just polished—but Minnie did. Not that Minnie moaned and wept. If she'd carried on same as Alphonse carried on, I'd not have worried myself over them at all. But of course she didn't. She went about looking pale and unhappy but trying to seem cheerful same as English people do natural when things go wrong. And it was Minnie that made me decide to do what I could to get the governor to take back Alphonse's sack. I knew, of course, that it was no use me approaching the governor about it. When the governor's made up his mind about anything, only one person in the world can make him unmake it. And that, of course, is the missis. And so we came to the missis.

Now when the governor was poor and before he made his money they used to keep a little grocer's shop. (They kept it till he found a new sort of sauce all through a mistake the missis made one day in a sauce she was trying to make out of a cookery book, but that's neither here nor there.) I should think that the missis must have been as good a wife as a man could have in those days. I never see the missis now without imagining her standing over a washtub or scrubbing a kitchen floor or mixing puddings. She's a fine figure of a woman, but that's the sort of thing she suggests. I've heard that when the governor was poor she was a splendid worker, and I can well believe it. But of course the drawback to a woman like that in being rich is that it leaves her nothing to do. And sure as Fate as soon as a woman's got nothing to do, she turns to spooks. I've seen it over and over again in my career as shuvver. As long as a woman has plenty to do she's all right. But the minute she hasn't, she turns to spooks. And the missis had turned to spooks. She was in fact messing about with them continual. She had things called Sayonses at the Hall every week and a person called a Mejum used to come, together with such a collection of freaks as made you pinch yourself to make sure you was awake. Then she used to sit for hours with a piece of paper in her hand waiting for spooks to write on it. Spooks seemed sort of shy of the missis, because nothing ever came of it 'cept her going to sleep. But it was a secret grief to the missis that she never heard things or saw things same as the others said they did, and that spooks never came to write on her little writing-pad. I've seen her quite low after a meeting with the other spookists because of all the spooks they'd seen and she hadn't. Once she said to me :

"Pinkie, I don't think I've got as much spirituality as I ought to have."

"Don't you worry'm," I said, "it's not spirituality that's wanted. It's imagination."

And I will do the missis the justice of saying that she hadn't no imagination. I've never yet known a woman with imagination that wouldn't have been better without it. But to return to Alphonse.

As soon as I'd got the idea I talked it over with Minnie and I began to see even more than I'd seen before what a nice sensible girl she was and what a pity it was that she'd allowed herself to get sweet on Alphonse. However, I stuck to my first idea, which was that if she wanted Alphonse she should have him.

Well, when we'd got the plan all fixed up we got Alphonse to do his ventriloquist turn for us. We had a sort of secret meeting in the garage and he did it. He didn't like doing it because, as I said, he'd got a sort of idea in his head that ventriloquism was low, but he did it. It was a very dull sort of affair—backchat in broken English without anything really funny or even vulgar from beginning to end—but there was no doubt at all that Alphonse could ventriloquise. You could hardly have believed that it was Alphonse saying the things. They seemed to come straight out of the air a few yards away. I thought less than ever of Alphonse for burying his talent in a serviette all this time same as the man in the Bible. Anyway, I saw that Minnie and I would have to manage the whole thing, but that if Alphonse would only do as he was told it would come off.

It was me began on the missis first of all. Fortunately the gardener was ill and I was doing a bit of gardenin' as well as shuvvin', just to oblige.

The missis came down to look at the roses, and when we'd got to just a few yards from the summer-house, I said respectful, as if not hardly liking to mention it:

"I don't know, mum, whether you've ever noticed something rather *curious* about this part of the garden?"

"Curious, Pinkie?" said the missis, pricking up her ears. "How—curious?"

"I don't know," I said reluctant-like. "I can't explain. But when I stand just here a most *curious* sort of feeling comes over me. And then when I go away it goes. And when I come back it comes back. That's all I can say."

"Are you psychic, Pinkie?" said the missis.

That was the first time I'd heard that word for it, but they're always inventing fresh words for it. It seems only a short time since I heard "canned" for the first time.

"No, mum," I said, dignified. "Except in emergencies I never touches it."

"I didn't mean that, Pinkie," she said. "I meant, are you subject to—er—influences from the other world?"

I saw then what she meant. She meant was I spooky, and I knew I'd better go cautious, because though I wanted her to think I was spooky on this occasion, I didn't want her to think I was spooky in general. I didn't want to have to see spooks for her regular as well as look after the car and do the garden. So I said:

"Well, mum, I never have done before, but it's really strange the curious feeling that comes over me when I stand just here. A sort of—well, a most curious sort of feeling—a sort of feeling of fear—as if something terrible had once happened here."

She pricked up her ears still more at that.

"Really?" she said. "How very strange! I—I'm interested in this sort of thing, Pinkie. Where exactly do you stand when this feeling comes over you?"

I showed her a spot about two yards from the summer-house. I stood there for a minute, then shivered and moved away. I sometimes think I'd have made a good actor, but on the whole I'd sooner be a shuvver. A shuvver gets a broader view of life than what an actor does. Well, I could see that she was getting more and more impressed.

"Just *here*, did you say, Pinkie?" she said, standing there and shutting her eyes. She stood like that for a few minutes, then said mournful and disappointed:

"No. I don't seem to feel anything out of the ordinary."

After trying again, screwing up her eyes as if she was at the dentist, she gave it up and went indoors. And now it was Minnie's turn. Minnie, I must say, did her part well. She didn't rush it. She waited till the missis had a chatty mood on (she has one on about every fortnight), and then she seemed to let the words fall by accident. She said that her grandfather remembered when there was a field where the Hall stood now and that none of the villagers would go across it after dark. Of course that made the missis prick up her ears again and she wanted to know all about it. And here Minnie (who's as clever a girl, by the way, as ever I met, as well as being the prettiest) was very cunning. She said that she really didn't know very much about it but that she just remembered hearing her grand-

father say that once, and then she seemed not to want to talk about it. Of course that drew the missis on like a magnate. Fortunately Minnie's grandfather was dead or the missis'd have been down after the old man then and there. 'Stead of that she went on and on at Minnie. Couldn't she remember more about it? *Why* was it they didn't like goin' across the place after dark? *What* part was it they didn't like going across after dark? Well, Minnie still went on seemin' not to want to talk about it till it drove the missis to fever pitch. Then,



"There was no doubt at all that he was getting cockier and cockier about his moan. We'd perhaps overpraised him at the start."

gradual and reluctant, Minnie said that she seemed to remember her grandfather once saying that some foreigner or other was murdered there and that the spot where they found his body was haunted by his ghost. Of course, the missis was off then like a cat after a mouse. Which spot was it exactly? Minnie said she didn't know exactly, but she thought that it was somewhere near where the summer-house was now. Well, the missis wouldn't be satisfied till she'd gone out with her and pointed out the exact spot. And, of course, Minnie showed her the spot where I'd had my feeling. The missis's blood was up. She was like a whole pack of greyhounds after a mechanical hare. She stood there again for about five minutes trying hard to get a feeling, but in the end she gave it up in despair.

"It's no use," she said, "I'm afraid I'm not psychic. Are you, Minnie?"

Minnie said hasty that she wasn't. But she said that she thought she remembered once hearing her grandfather say that the spot was only haunted at the time the murder was committed. The missis wanted to know what time that was, and Minnie said she'd forgotten. Of course that only spurred the missis on still more and she begged of Minnie almost in tears to think. So Minnie thought. And in the end she said that she thought she remembered hearing her grandfather say that it was just half-past ten at night.

Well, of course, we knew that the missis would be down there by the summer-house at half-past ten that night. And now it was Alphonse's turn. We'd chosen half-past ten because Alphonse is supposed to be off duty from nine to eleven, and we'd got Alphonse safely hidden in the summer-house, and me and Minnie hid in the bushes near so that we could hear and see. At ten-thirty prompt the missis arrived, as we knew she would. She stood on the spot and shut her eyes and waited.

And then——

Well, I still hold the view about foreigners what I told you earlier on, and yet I've got to admit that that groan of Alphonse's was as good as any Englishman could do.

It startled Minnie so much that she clung to me and I just put my arm round her to comfort her. She didn't seem to realise it was there for a minute or two, then she got out of it sort of gradual and reluctant. But to return to Alphonse.

It was a hollow, long-drawn-out sort of moan and it seemed to come out of the air on just the spot where the missis stood. She gave one scream, then took to her heels and ran back to the house.

Minnie and me came out of the bushes and Alphonse came out of the summer-house. He seemed a bit peevish and said that he was stiff with kneeling under the table and that a mouse had bitten his ankle.

Me and Minnie, of course, bucked him up by admiring his moan till he got quite perky and began to put on side about it no end, telling us what managers and people had said about his ventriloquism when he was on the Halls.

The same thing happened the next night. The missis came down to the haunted spot, me and Minnie watched in the bushes, and Alphonse, doubled up under the table in the summer-house, did his moan. It was a better moan than ever, and again the missis screamed and took to her heels, and again Alphonse came out rather sulky, sayin' that he'd got cramp and thought there must be a wasps' nest or something in there because something had bit him again. Again we cheered him up by admiring his moan till he got perky again and began to boast the way I'd be ashamed to do myself if I could moan like twenty corpses. I felt sorry for Minnie, but, of course, as I kept telling myself, it was nothing to do with me.

Well, we all knew that the missis would have her courage up by the third night. She'd have got used to the sound of the moan and she'd want to get on to the second chapter, so to speak. She'd not told anyone about it. There's something about spookism that makes all them who go in for it like that. They never tell anyone about it till it's all over, and then they make it into such a tale that the poor spook itself wouldn't recognise it. Spookism has the same effect on people as fishing in that way. It seems to take away all sense of shame with regard to accuracy. I mean, a fisherman showing you the size of the one that got away is nothing to the spookist telling you what she saw last night. But to return to Alphonse.

The next night he moaned better than ever, but the missis didn't run away. She stood her ground like a good 'un and said:

"Who are you? Speak!"

Alphonse had orders only to moan that night too, because we didn't want to rush things, and we thought she'd just ask it once and then get scared again. But she didn't. She went on saying, "Who are you? Speak!" And Alphonse went on moaning in reply till we began to get a bit nervous, because it seemed as if it might go on for ever, and once Alphonse sneezed, at which Minnie clung to me in horror. I put an arm round her again to console her and somehow forgot to take it away. The missis went on saying, "Who are you? Speak!" and Alphonse moaning till fortunately it began to rain and the missis went indoors. Alphonse came out in a rather better temper that night. For one thing, nothing had bit him, because I'd found a wasps' nest there during the day and had taken it away. And for another there was no doubt at all that he was getting cockier and cockier about his moan. We'd perhaps overpraised him at the start. Anyway, he began to put on more side than ever, especially with Minnie, saying that she didn't understand an artist's feeling and what a nervous strain it all was to him. In fact, he carried on like that till I could have smacked his head; but of course I didn't,



"The missis stretched out her hand dramatic-like. 'Friend, your spirit may rest,' she said."

because, as I said before, I'd decided that if Minnie wanted him she should have him. If Minnie had wanted one of the pyramids of Egypt I'd have got it for her, even if it had meant penal servitude for life for me.

The next evening was to be the climax. It started very well with a fine night and Alphonse in a good temper in the summer-house (I'd swept it out for him during the day because he was beginning to complain now that it made his trousers dusty) and me and Minnie in the bushes. Well, the missis came out as usual at half-past ten and Alphonse started his moan prompt.

"Who are you? Speak!" said the missis as usual.

And Alphonse spoke. He spoke in his ordinary squeaky little voice, but it did somehow sound different, coming, as it seemed to, out of thin air just in the missis's ear.

"I'm a foreigner," he said, "done to death in your inhospitable land."

(I'd made that bit up. Pretty good, wasn't it? But I've always been inclined to be litery. I often think that if I hadn't been a shuvver I'd have been a writer, but of course a shuvver's is a more self-respectin' sort of life than a writer's.)

Well, then the missis said (we knew she'd say it; it's the sort of thing spookists always say), "What can I do to give your spirit rest, my poor man?"

And Alphonse said:

"An injustice is being done here to a countryman of mine. If that injustice is put right my spirit can find rest."

That bit was Minnie's. That girl has a brain, if you like. I've never come across a girl before with both looks and brain and —but to return to Alphonse.

The missis said all trembly-like, "Do you mean Alphonse getting the sack?" she said.

And Alphonse moaned again and said "Yes."

The missis stretched out her hand dramatic-like.

"Friend, your spirit may rest," she said, "it will be all right. I'll see that Alphonse's sack is withdrawn ere the dawn."

You see she didn't quite know what sort of language to use to spooks, so she used a sort of mixed kind. Then Alphonse gave a sort of dying-away groan and all was still.

"Are you happy now?" said the missis.

And Alphonse squeaked "Yes."

Then the missis went straight indoors to tell the guv'nor to take back Alphonse's sack.

And now comes the end of the story.

The missis was as good as her word and Alphonse's sack was taken back that night. But would he have it? No. Doing his ventriloquism had sort of set his blood yearning for the life of the Halls again, and us praising him so about it had given him a swollen head so's he'd quite got over his old idea that it was low. He told Minnie that he was an artist and that his art must come before love, and that he didn't think she was the sort of wife for an artist like him, and that there was no telling to what heights he'd climb, and a lot more stuff like that.

And, believe me, he actually got a job in a Music Hall and set off cocky as you like the day his notice ran out, leaving the missis a-wringing her hands on the doorstep, and saying hysterical that he was condemning a poor departed soul to wander restless.

Of course she went down to the place near the summer-house that night waiting for the moanin', but none came. I did once think of doing a bit of moanin' just to cheer her up, but I wasn't sure that I could have ventriloquised properly, never having tried, so I gave up the idea. (Mind, I don't say I couldn't have ventriloquised with a bit of practice, because I've got a firm belief that anything a foreigner can do an Englishman can do better, but what with all the metal-work on the new car I've really no time to take up ventriloquism as well as everything else.) You needn't waste any pity on the missis, however, because—well, the tale she made out of it at her next spook meeting, you'd hardly have believed! She not only made up pages of talk between her and the ghost, but even told them exactly what it looked like—long grey hair and long grey beard and all. I was weeding the beds just outside the drawing-room window and I couldn't help hearin' her. The missis got pleasure out of that little episode for years to come. It made her the heart and soul of every spook meeting she went to for the rest of her life. But to return to Alphonse. I believe he's getting on fine. Someone told me they'd seen him at the Victoria Palace and that he was engaged to a foreign woman who holds the balls for the juggler and wears pink padded tights with spangles on them and a black wig.

And Minnie? No, Minnie wasn't half as cut up about it as you'd imagine.

In fact she told me herself last night that it was, as they say, a blessing in disguise. Which, of course, means—but we'll leave it at that.

Our Great Public Schools

THEIR TRADITIONS, CUSTOMS & GAMES

By F. A. M. WEBSTER

WESTMINSTER SCHOOL



"*ELIZABETH, by the grace of God, of England, France, and Ireland, queen, defender of the faith, etc., to our beloved in Christ the Dean and Chapter of our collegiate church of the Blessed Peter of Westminster, health in Jesu the Saviour.*

"*The rate, or distribution, of the College of the Blessed Peter at Westminster, founded by the most illustrious Queen Elizabeth.*"

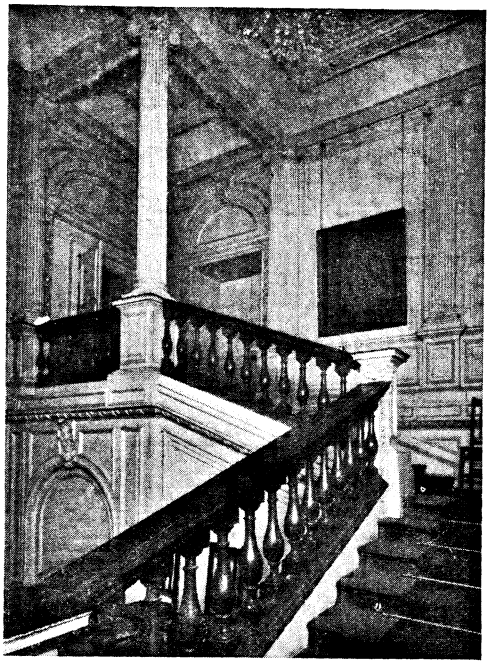
Thus runs the ancient statute of 1560 whereby Good Queen Bess founded Westminster School, or, to quote the full style and title, St. Peter's College of Westminster. In reality, however, the history of Westminster can be traced by documentary evidence from 1339 onwards, in the form of a Grammar School attached to the Monastery of St. Peter, Westminster.

We may, unfortunately, no longer believe that Abbot Ingulphus, who was scribe to William the Conqueror, wrote the *Description of Croyland Abbey*, since that is now judged a spurious document of the fourteenth century, but perhaps, after all, the unknown writer was educated at a school in Westminster and did, in fact, receive several pieces of money and plenty of good food from the royal larder after he had met Queen Edgitha, consort of Edward the Confessor, and had satisfied the royal lady of his efficiency in grammar and logic.

At all events Canon Westlake, an historian of Westminster, stated in July, 1925, that he had discovered in the Chamberlain's Roll of 1339–40 an entry of the payment of 9*s.* 8*d.* to John Payn for finding scholars for the Westminster School.

We have it also on the authority of Dean Stanley's *Memorials* that "in the north cloister, close by the entrance to the church, where the monks usually walked, sate the prior. In the western—the one still most familiar to Westminster scholars—sate the master of the novices, with his disciples."

This was the beginning of Westminster School. Then, again, Fitzstephen, in his *Life of Thomas à Becket*, relates how the boys of three great London schools met annually on certain days to challenge one



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THE GRAND STAIRCASE IN ASHBURNHAM HOUSE.

another in versification and the principles of grammar, and Stow has supposed that these boys belonged to the schools of St. Peter's, Westminster, St. Paul's, London, and St. Peter's, Cornhill. The last authority states, further, that in his youth he had seen yearly: "On the eve of St. Bartholomew the apostle, the scholars of divers grammar schools repair to the churchyard of St. Bartholomew, where, upon a bank boarded under a tree, some one scholar hath stepped up, and there opposed and answered, till he were of some better scholar overcome and put down, and then, the overcomer taking his place, did like as the first, and in the end the best opposer and answerer had rewards."

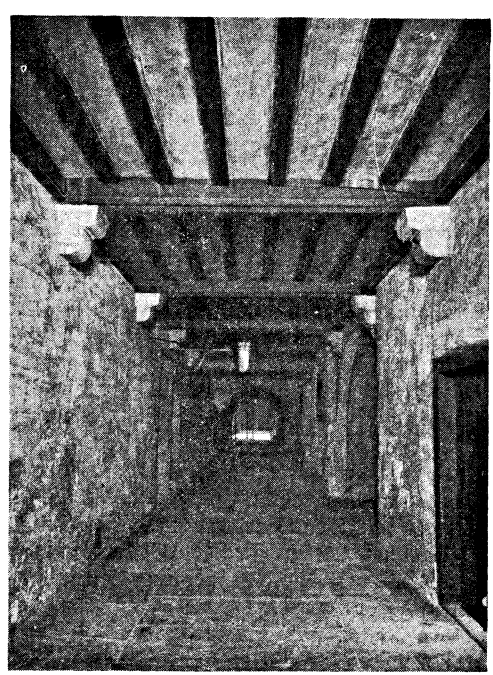
"I remember," says Stow, "that there repaired to these exercises (among others) the master and scholars of St. Paul's, London, and St. Peter's, Westminster."

These practices, no doubt, indicate the origin of the Westminster "Challenges," by which admission to the College was determined almost up to the end of the last century, and which still obtains, in name at least, since admission to vacancies among the King's Scholars, which average ten a year, is by open competition in an examination named "The Challenge," held during June in each year.

Fitzstephen, of course, is the recognised authority concerning the social life of London in the twelfth century, and he tells us, of the boys' sports during the reign of Henry II, that "on a day every year, we begin with the games of the boys, when on *Carnilevaria* (i.e. Shrove Tuesday) all the boys in each school bring their masters their game cocks and fighting cocks, and all the forenoon is devoted to the boys' play, fighting cocks in their schools. After dinner the whole youth of the city sally out into the fields to the popular game of ball. Each school hath its own ball, and nearly all the holders of civic offices also provide one."

And since the handling code did not begin until, in 1823, William Webb Ellis of Rugby picked up the ball and ran with it, one may imagine that Westminster boys of seven hundred years ago indulged in a crude form of the Association game so efficiently played by their successors of to-day at Vincent Square.

Another glimpse of early history is afforded to us by one Widmore, who records how from the last years of the reign of Edward III until the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII a salary was paid to a schoolmaster, "*Magister scholarium pro eruditione puerorum grammaticorum.*" This master must not, however, be con-



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THE DARK CLOISTER THROUGH WHICH THE BOYS PASS TO THE ABBEY.

fused with him who taught singing to the choir.

At the Reformation the Monastery of St. Peter was surrendered to the Crown, but Henry VIII included the school in his draft for the new See of Westminster. Thus was founded a school for forty scholars and two masters and the new chapter was charged with numerous payments for educational purposes.

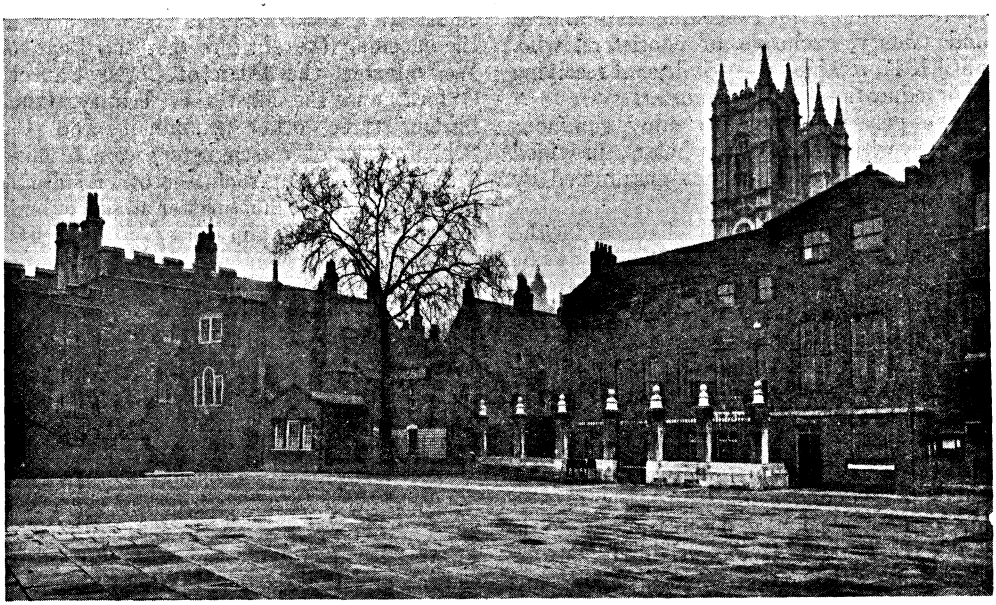
The first headmaster of the newly constituted school seems to have been John Adams, but we know nothing more about him than his name. His successor in 1543 was Alexander Nowell, " formerly of Brazen-Nose College, Oxenford," who is well remembered as the author of the *Catechism*.

From contemporary writings it would appear that Nowell greatly improved the standard of learning at Westminster and kept his boys until they were " almost of man's estate." He had, however, an almost greater fondness for fishing than for learning, and, as Fuller says, " whilst Nowell was a-catching of fishes, Bonner was a-catching of Nowell, and understanding who he was, designed him for the shambles."

Nowell, indeed, had something of a genius for getting himself into trouble, for he not only dealt so plainly and faithfully with Queen Elizabeth from the pulpit that she " called out to him to retire from that ungodly digression and return to his text," but he also got at odds with the fanatical Romanist Bishop of London in Queen Mary's reign and had to fly the country, only to return and discover the secret of the making of bottled beer. This he did by seeking out a bottle of ale he had left hidden on his last fishing expedition. As Fuller has it, " he found no bottle, but a gun, such was the sound of the opening thereof, and this is believed the origin of bottled beer in England."

Queen Mary restored the monastic character of Westminster, but although she seems to have omitted to make specific provision for the school, it carried on quite undisturbed.

When Elizabeth, again, suppressed the monks, the school now became part and parcel of the re-established collegiate church of St. Peter, Westminster. Two masters were appointed, the one called " *archididasculus* " and the other " *hypodidasculus*," after Queen Elizabeth had directed, by letters patent, dated June 11, 1560, that the statutes for the foundation should be drawn up ordaining that the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge, should, " in remembrance of her father's benefactions to them," henceforth annually elect to their scholarships as many indi-



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LITTLE DEAN'S YARD, SHOWING ASHBURNHAM HOUSE, WITH WREN'S ABBEY TOWERS BEHIND.

gent youths as possible from Westminster. There were also three scholarships to Christ Church, Oxford.

The school was to consist of forty scholars, who were to receive a free education in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and preference of places was to be given to the sons of chapter tenants and to choristers. These forty, the Queen's Scholars, received a small allowance for commons in hall and were also given their gowns.

It is at this period that we hear first of scholars other than the foundationers, whose parents might not possess any independent property of more than £10 a year.

The other boys, styled *pensionarii, oppidani* and *peregrini*, were to bring the school up to a number not exceeding one hundred and twenty, exclusive of choristers, who, until 1847, retained the privilege of receiving their education at Westminster.

The pensioners were to enjoy commons in hall with the forty scholars, provided payment for that same was guaranteed by one of the tutors.

How little things have changed in the last three and a half centuries may be judged from the present system, whereby, after the "standing-out" between candidates for scholarships, the number is made up each year to forty resident and ten non-resident King's Scholars. Elizabeth decreed that a boy should not enter the school under seven nor stay at it after he was eighteen years of age. To-day, roughly speaking, a boy must be under fourteen when he sits for his examination, and the leaving age is much the same as it was originally. Resident King's Scholars receive a scholarship of over £100 annual value, out of which they must pay £46 per annum. A non-resident K.S. who lives in a Boarding House receives about £70 a year, which is reduced by £5 or £10 if he lives at home.

It is worth noting that a King's Scholar holds his scholarship subject to an annual examination, and forfeits his place on the Foundation if he fails to satisfy the examiners of his industry and progress in study.

There are also offered a certain number of Exhibitions varying from £20 to £30.

Town boys are admitted from 12 to 14 years of age and either board at one of the Boarding Houses or attend school as day boys. If they are connected with a Boarding House and dine there they are termed Half-Boarders, if they are attached to a non-boarding house and dine in College Hall they are called Home Boarders.

Another point of similarity between ancient and modern times is found in the circumstance that Queen Elizabeth ordained that the boys should attend "daily prayers in Henry the Seventh's Chapel at six o'clock in the morning," while, now, the whole school begins its day at 9.30 a.m. with a short service in the Abbey.

Games seem to have been but little considered at first, and discipline was very strict. Monitors were elected from among the gravest of the scholars, and if any monitor offended in any particular he was flogged, as an example to others.

By the original statute Friday was fixed as Punishment Day, and the Monday after the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul (June 29) as Election Day, when at eight o'clock in the morning the electors (i.e. the Dean of Westminster, the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and the Master of Trinity, Cambridge, three other examiners and the Schoolmaster of Westminster) were to meet in the Hall, dining-room, or other suitable place, when the schoolmaster would submit for examination and election his best scholars of the highest forms. On the next ensuing Wednesday took place elections to the Universities.

Nowadays the election to the Universities takes place at the end of July in each year, the School attending ten o'clock service in Abbey on Election Sunday and Election Tuesday.

Election Sunday service at Westminster is one of the most picturesque of the whole year. There is a state procession headed by the Deans of Westminster and Christ Church and the Master of Trinity, followed by the King's Scholars in evening dress, pink buttonhole, and surplices unbuttoned. On that day the music is exceptionally good, even for the Abbey, and the King's Scholars have the privilege of selecting it.

One may perhaps here interpolate a word concerning the other scholarships. In 1569 Archbishop Parker founded three such, tenable at Corpus Christi, Cambridge; in 1621 Dean Williams, later Archbishop of York and Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, founded four more, the holders of which were called "Bishops Boys" and wore episcopal purple; while Sir Robert Wood, Kt., of Islington, in 1659 created three at St. John's College, Cambridge, with preference in election to be given to Westminster scholars. To these, numerous other benefactions have been added from time to time.

Special provision was made for the educa-

tion of the choristers, " ten boys of tender age, with clear voices." All scholars were required to spend the night in one of two chambers, two in a bed, and at five o'clock one of the four Chamber Præpostors intoned " Surgiter," or " Get Up." Then came prayers, after which boys made their beds, swept dirt and dust from under them and left it in the middle of the chamber for the four boys appointed by the monitor to clear out. Next, " by twos in a long line " they went down to wash their hands before taking their places in School.

In Elizabeth's time the annual benefice of the Dean was fixed at £224 13*s.* 4*d.*, the prebendaries received £27 5*s.*, the choirmaster £11 11*s.* 8*d.*, the Headmaster £19 11*s.* 8*d.*, and the under-master £13 11*s.* 8*d.*, contemporary money, of course, and all representing incomes far greater in modern currency.

The Dean kept table at his own expense in Hall, Common Room or Chamber, or he might live at the common table with the residentiary canons. The Grammar Masters, who were required always to be in Commons, the Chaplains, clerks and gentlemen sat at the second table, while the other tables were occupied by the scholars and pensioners in proper order.

The first Headmaster under the new *régime* was Master Nicholas Udall, who had left the headmastership of Eton in some disgrace, since his character is said not to have been equal to his scholarship. He was the author of our earliest English comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister*, and evidently somewhat choleric, for Thomas Tusser, who wrote the *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*, testified how, when at Eton, he received three-and-fifty stripes from Udall for " fault but small or none at all."

William Camden, who became Headmaster in 1593, published four years later his famous Eton Greek Grammar and was, in the same year, appointed Clarencieux King-at-Arms. Among his most famous pupils was Ben Jonson, born in 1574 and brought up by his stepfather, a bricklayer by trade, who lived in Hartshorn Lane, hard by Charing Cross.

Jonson commemorated his old Head in a poem beginning as follows :—

" Camden ! most reverend head, to whom I owe
All that I am in arts, all that I know
(How nothing's that); to whom my country owes
The great renown, and name wherewith she goes ! "

George Herbert and his friend John Hacket, afterwards Bishop of Lichfield, were



[*Sport & General.*

SCHOOL.

Formerly the Monks' Dormitory. The nearest bar used to divide the Upper and Lower Schools, and over this the pancake is tossed on Shrove Tuesday.



[*Sport & General.*

BOYS "COMING DOWN" SCHOOL AFTER PRAYERS.

pupils of the next Headmaster, Richard Ireland. He was succeeded by Lambert Osbolston, so famous in "breeding up many wits" that he is said, by 1638, to have had from Westminster, "above four-score doctors in the two Universities and three learned faculties, all gratefully acknowledging their education under him." Cowley, the poet, was also among his King's Scholars, and at the age of 13 was producing, and having published, amazing work.

Osbolston, however, was unfortunate enough to incur the enmity of Archbishop Laud, whom he is said to have libelled as "the little vermin" in a letter to Williams. He was condemned by the Star Chamber to lose all his preferments and to pay fines of £5,000 to the King and a like sum to the Archbishop, to be nailed by his ears to the pillory in Palace Yard in the presence of his scholars and, thereafter, to remain in prison during the King's pleasure.

Not unwisely Osbolston, like Nowell before him, sought safety in flight, and so Westminster got her great Headmaster, Richard Busby, about whom there are sufficient anecdotes and legends to fill a fair-sized volume.

He was born at Lutton, in Lincolnshire, on September 22nd, 1606, educated at Westminster, and from there gained election to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1624.

It appears, however, that his qualities and circumstances were such that St. Margaret's Vestry made him an *ex gratia* payment of £5 to enable him to take his B.A. degree, and a further gratuity of £6 13*s.* 4*d.* to "proceed M.A." at Christ Church. It is only fair to add that this municipal munificence did not go unrequited, for when Busby died on April 6th, 1695, in his eighty-ninth year, he bequeathed £50 a year to poor householders, and £5,000 in personal property to the parish.

At Oxford he played the part of Cratander in Cartwright's *Royal Slave*, before King Charles and Queen Henrietta, with such success that he came near to adopting the stage as his profession, but thought better of it and in 1638 returned to his old school to enter upon his fifty-seven years' headmastership at one of the most critical periods of English history. In the same year Thomas Wentworth, recently become Earl of Strafford, was recalled to England and proposed to bring over the Irish troops, the Scots Covenanters were up in arms, and the English people themselves breeding a greater disaffection towards their King.

Throughout the Civil War that followed Westminster stood loyal to Charles I, yet Busby managed, perhaps on account of his great reputation as a teacher, to retain his headmastership right through the Civil War, the Commonwealth, the Restoration and the Revolution, despite the fact that Richard Owen, the eloquent Dean of Christ Church, declared to his friend Oliver Cromwell that "it would never be well with the nation till Westminster School were suppressed."

Nor was the part played by the School altogether an inactive one. In 1642, when the Abbey was attacked by a mob of Puritans, the boys put up a great fight, preventing the attackers from destroying the organ and some ornaments of the church, while it is reported that the tile which killed the leader, a certain knight of Kent named Wiseman, was flung from the battlements by the hand of a Westminster boy.

On the day of the execution of King Charles, Robert South, later to become the brilliant preacher and wit of the Restoration period, but then a boy at Westminster, was in office for the customary reading of the morning prayers and did pray publicly and by name for the deliverance and salvation of the unhappy Stuart king.

That Busby was a real character is evidenced by the occasion when he is said to have walked, head covered, beside Charles II, with, by way of explanation or apology, the remark, "If my boys supposed there was any greater in the school than myself

there would be at once an end to my authority."

He was never at a loss for a repartee, and once, when a tall Irish baronet sneered at his height, addressing him as "giant," he retaliated with "pigmy." "Sir," said the baronet," I referred to your intellect." "And I, sir, to yours," riposted Busby. Like many a small-statured headmaster before him and since, he was a great believer in the power of the rod. This he termed his "sieve" and was wont to say that "whoso did not pass through it was no boy for him."

In the twenty-fifth year of his headmastership Richard Busby was called upon to cope with further untoward happenings. That was the year of the Great Plague, and Westminster School transferred, lock, stock, and barrel, to its Summer House at Chiswick, which had been provided years before by the foresight of Dean Goodman, for the learning of lessons in summer-time and as a refuge for those who were sick. None the less, the Plague spread to Chiswick and at last Busby had to send the boys home, where they remained for some ten months.

No sooner were the boys back at school in Westminster than the Great Fire imposed a fresh test upon their versatility and fortitude. On that occasion the King's Scholars were assembled by John Dolben, Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster, and marched to the Church of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East, where they laboured many hours, fetching water, until they happily extinguished that particular fire.

There is a good tale of Busby and the famous Father Petre, who had been a boy under him at Westminster.

When they met in later life, Busby, so far from complimenting the Roman Catholic priest upon his fame, remonstrated with him. "You were of a different faith when you were under me: how dared you change it?" "Sir, the Lord had need of me," pleaded the priest. "Humph!" replied Busby. "I've read the Scriptures as much as any man, and I never read that the Lord had need of anything but once, and then it was an ass."

"*Quæcunque demum sit fama Scholæ Westmonasteriensis, quicquid inde ad homines fructus redundarit, Busbeio maxime debetur, atque in omne porro ævum debebitur.*"

Thus runs the epitaph beneath Busby's marble in the Abbey. Sir Roger de Coverley once stood before it and exclaimed in awe: "Dr Busby, a great man; whipped my grandfather; a very great man. I should have gone to him myself, if I had not been a blockhead; a very great man!"

To Dr. Busby's worth and what he did for Westminster a greater tribute has been paid by his old boys Dryden, South, Henry Aldrich, Francis Atterbury, Barton Booth, John Locke, Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough, Humphrey Prideaux, Matthew Prior, Nicholas Rowe, and Sir Christopher Wren, to say nothing of Thomas Knipe, who sat under him as a pupil, served him as usher and under-master, and, finally, succeeded him in the headmastership.

Under Knipe the numbers of the School rose in 1706 to 400 boys, a larger list than that of the present day. The prosperity Busby had built up and Knipe carried on was maintained under Friend, and in 1727 Westminster reached its highest recorded total of 434 boys.

Friend's house was the resort of all the wits and statesmen of his time; it was in his days that Westminster boys meted out drastic punishment to Curll, the piratical publisher of Temple Bar. More than once the boys had drubbed this person for his malpractices. Finally he published, without



[*Sport & General.*

"MONOS."

A King's Scholar and the Senior Town Boy capping the Masters as they leave Up School after prayers.

permission, some scraps of the funeral oration delivered over the corpse of the Rev. Dr. South by John Barber, then captain of Westminster School.

For this act of piracy the King's Scholars nabbed Curll within the precincts of Dean's Yard and treated him to a " College Salutation," which was no light matter—for the publisher. He was tossed in a blanket until his bones rattled, carried into the School and given a " Grammatical Correction " for his false concords, deposited on his knees in the Yard and forced to sue humbly for John Barber's pardon, and finally kicked out and left to the huzzas of the common rabble.

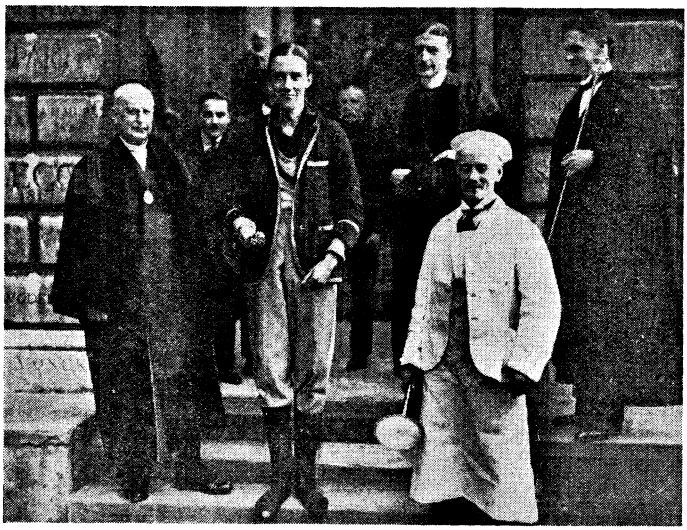
Among the most famous of Friend's many distinguished boys may be reckoned William Murray, who entered the school in 1718, having ridden all the way from his Scottish home on a Galloway pony, attended by one old family retainer. He was a boy of extraordinary ability and in 1723 was elected head of Christ Church; in later years he became the brilliant Lord Chief Justice of England.

In 1733 the Headmaster was again succeeded by one of his own under-masters, when John Nicholl assumed the reins of office. He was in many ways an extraordinary man, for he scorned the rod and relied upon his power of appeal to the schoolboy's sense of honour. We learn, indeed, from Richard Cumberland's *Memoirs*, that " there was a court of honour in that school, to whose unwritten laws every member of our community was amenable."

It is evident that Nicholl's system worked well, for he turned out great men in Churchill, Cumberland, Colman the elder, Cowper the poet, and Warren Hastings, to say nothing of three future headmasters of Westminster, Hinchcliffe, Smith, and Vincent.

Cowper has commemorated his own sojourn at Westminster in those lines in his *Table Talk* that run :—

" At Westminster, where little poets strive
To set a distich upon six and five,
Where Discipline helps opening buds of sense,
And makes his pupils proud with silver pence,
I was a poet too; . . . ."



[*Sport & General.*

TOSSING THE PANCAKE.

Dr. Foxley Norris (the Dean), D. E. Barker (the winner), Dr. Costley White (the Headmaster) and the Chef.

The silver pence to which the poet refers were a customary reward, established by Queen Elizabeth, it is believed, and now distributed when the epigrams are recited annually " up school." They are, in fact, the three pounds of Maundy Money to which Westminster is entitled free of charge and for which the Headmaster still makes application to the authorities.

The next Headmaster was William Markham (1753), who was elevated to the Archbishopric of York and formed the subject of one of Sir Joshua Reynolds's paintings. He was succeeded by that ambitious Old Westminster, John Hinchcliffe, son of a livery stable keeper in Swallow Street, who married a sister of Lord Crewe and resigned the headmastership of Westminster upon appointment as Master of Trinity, a post he again quitted to become Bishop of Peterborough.

Samuel Smith came next; he it was who was called upon to quell Westminster's one and only rebellion, which seems to have been a somewhat mild affair, compared with those which took place at Winchester and Rugby. Or perhaps Dr. Smith took sterner measures at the outset of the trouble, for he went up school armed with a thick stick and with it laid out Sir Francis Burdett, one of the chief malcontents, whom he afterwards expelled.

None the less, Smith has been described as good-natured but very dull, in comparison with his under-master, Dr. Vincent, who twice passed through the school from bottom to top, first as a boy and then from junior usher to headmaster.

Southey, whose *Lives* are famous, was under Smith and got himself expelled subsequently by Dr. Vincent for an attack on the headmaster's system of corporal punishment in a school paper he ran called *The Flagellant*. This was after Smith had suppressed his previous periodical *The Trifler*, which had been started in emulation of the Eton *Microcosm*.

Vincent's great work for the School was really done in 1810 when he sent for a plough and marked out 10 acres of the Tuttle Fields, upon which buildings were beginning to encroach, "to be reserved for the use of the School for ever." A wise precaution which has enabled Westminster to remain in its unique position, and to preserve its traditions intact, with its playing-fields right in the heart of London.

John Wingfield, who came next, held office less than a year; then came the period, under Dr. Carey, when Westminster reaped an almost entirely new sort of fame. The Duke of York, ever an interested patron, recommended the school right and left among his friends, and, not unnaturally, with so many boys of military families entering its portals, Westminster became a famous training ground for soldiers. It seems, too, that at this time the school life became one of Spartan simplicity, such as evidently appealed to the Iron Duke, for Wellington declared that the Westminster officers were quite the best serving on his staff during the Peninsular Campaign. It may be noted, incidentally, that of seven Field-Marshals appointed between 1846 and 1855 four were Old Westminsters, viz., Thomas Grosvenor and Lords Anglesey, Raglan and Combermere.

Drs. Hinchcliffe and Carey were both noted for their benefactions, which have done so much to help Westminsters at Christ Church.

Edmund Goodenough, appointed in 1819,



[*Topical.*

THE "GREAZE."

Their Majesties the King and Queen, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York witnessing the "Pancake Greaze" in 1919.

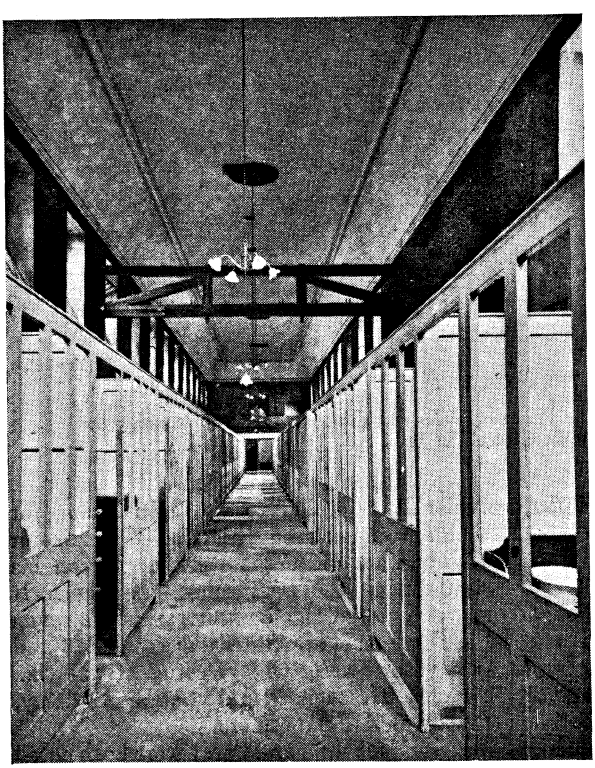
was the last King's Scholar to hold the post of Headmaster, and Richard Williamson, upon whom his mantle descended, was a Town Boy from 1814 to 1819, and the last Old Westminster to preside over the school.

He was a very amiable person and is remembered for his introduction of the Greek costumes into the representation of the Latin plays, but under him the number of boys declined in 1841 to 67—a point even lower than Harrow fell under Wordsworth.

The next important date in the School's history is 1868, when the Public Schools Act was passed and Westminster, although at last severed from the Abbey upon the creation of its own governing body, was listed as one of the "Big Seven" public schools. The severance, of course, was the outcome of the reports of the Clarendon Commission of 1865.

Among other things recommended by the Commissioners had been that the Chapter of Westminster, with an income exceeding £60,000 per annum, should assume the whole cost of educating the "Queen's Scholars," and that the payments from the Oppidans should be increased. They took note also of the fact that up to 1846 the "Queen's Scholars" had been granted only the use of one large dormitory, in which they lived by day and slept by night. They recommended further that the annual charge of £34 13*s*. for the scholars should be reduced to £20.

There was raised, also, an important point in connection with purely school property, which was to be vested in the Governors, with the provision that should the School be removed from its present site such buildings and lands will revert to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. This is especially mentioned as it may well supply the interesting reason why Westminster School keeps its old home in the shadow of the Abbey long after the Charterhouse has been deserted by the poor children or scholars of Sutton's foundation for healthier Godalming; while Christ's Hospital has removed to Horsham, the City of London School forsaken Milk Street, and St. Paul's School departed from the City to make room for the warehouses which have taken its place since the nineties of the last century.



[*Sport & General.*

COLLEGE DORMITORY.

Here the Westminster play takes place each year.

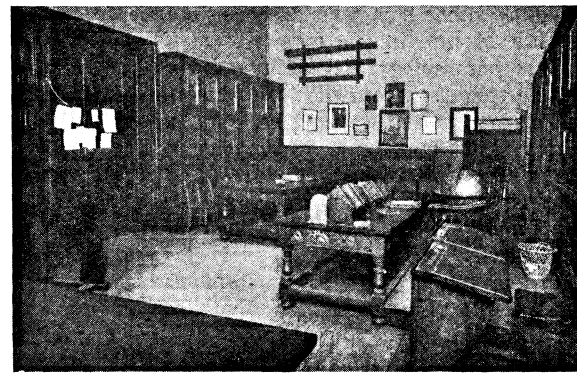
Westminster, like Rugby, seems to have "enjoyed" its era of brutality, for the Commissioners specially drew the attention of the masters to the need for the abolition of the use of rackets, caps and other instruments of punishment by seniors upon juniors, and the practice of kicking of juniors, while the "fagging" custom of lighting fires and gas and the getting up at an unduly early hour by juniors for the benefit of senior scholars, it was suggested, should be replaced by the employment of servants to perform these menial offices.

To me it is a matter of never-ending wonder that, of the hundreds of thousands of people who visit Westminster Abbey each year, so few seem to know that so famous a School as Westminster shelters itself, literally, beneath the shadow of the famous fane.

The School Yard is entered through a groined archway adjoining the Headmaster's house. Two of the large houses on the right, called respectively "Rigaud's" and "Grant's," are used as boarding houses for the Town Boys; the

other is the residence of the Master of the King's Scholars. Ashburnham House, standing on the left, has one of the finest staircases of its kind in London. Inigo Jones designed this house for the first Lord Ashburnham, and the panelling is probably the work of Isaac Ware.

It was in 1731 that Dr. Bentley, in his nightshirt, with the huge Alexandrian manuscript of the New Testament clasped in his arms, ran out of Ashburnham House, which had caught fire. The books he deposited in the old dormitory, and there they stayed until they were removed to the British Museum in 1757. The great Schoolroom is approached by a doorway, designed by Boyle, Earl of Burlington, deep in the stone of which are carved the names of famous Old Westminsters. The Schoolroom beyond is 110 feet long by 44 feet in breadth and was, prior to 1591, a Monks' Dormitory. Here again names and more names of Old Westminsters are carved or painted upon the walls. At the upper end of the room was a curious apse, known as the Shell. Here is an old form, upon which John Dryden carved his name. To the right of the Shell, and leading to a classroom, is an old doorway, once the entrance to the famous Star Chamber.



[*Sport & General.*

THE BUSBY LIBRARY AND SEVENTH FORM ROOM.

In other days the upper and lower schools were separated by a curtain drawn across the room. Addison, in the *Spectator*, told a good story anent this curtain. One day, apparently, a boy pulled the curtain back and thereby let himself in for a thrashing by Dr. Busby. William Wake, however, took the punishment, and years later, as a Royalist, was implicated in the Penruddock and Wagstaff risings. The Judge who presided at Exeter Assizes was the boy whom Wake had saved, and it was through his influence that Cromwell was persuaded to spare the "malignant."

For upwards of two hundred years the Scholars' dormitory was situated in the old monastic granary, but in the third decade of the eighteenth century Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington, erected the present building which now houses College. Here live the forty Scholars, who still wear the distinctive dress of cap and gown. The ground floor provides the daytime studies and above is the dormitory, where all sleep at night in separate cubicles. Needless to add, the walls are covered with the names of former King's and Queen's Scholars. Here also the Westminster Play is given.

From College, by way of dark cloisters, the "Fighting Green" is reached, where former generations witnessed many a fierce encounter before "first school." Those famous "mills" are now episodes of a bygone age, but there are Old Westminsters still living who can recall the time when the now peaceful Green in the middle of the Cloisters served as an excellent "ring." One of the last great fights fought there was that in which the late Mr. Justice Bucknill was one of the combatants.

But if the "milling" days are no more, boxing tradition has been well maintained at Westminster by R. R. Rawson, who won the Light-Heavy-Weight at Cambridge in 1913 and boxed against Oxford in the following year. In 1920 and 1921 he was Heavy-Weight Amateur Boxing Champion of Great Britain.

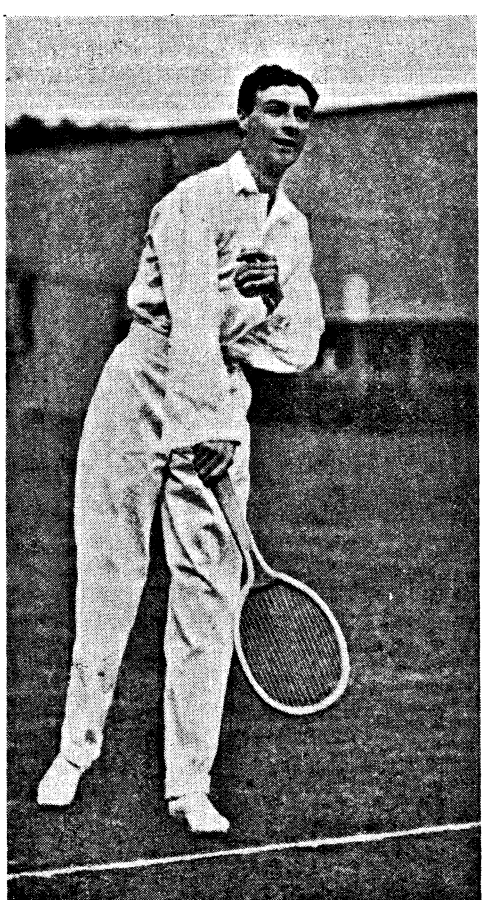
College Hall is approached by a covered stairway and was formerly the refectory of the Abbot's house. It was built by Abbot Litlington in the reign of Edward III. It is now the Scholars' dining-place, and here, also, the governing body gives its annual "Election" dinner to the examiners and a number of Old Westminsters, this being the occasion when epigrams are recited by the boys during the dessert time. The massive tables are said to have been made from the wreckage of Spanish Armada.

And now a few words must be said concerning the idioms and sporting pastimes of Westminster.

To the new boy it is no doubt puzzling to be told that there is "station" for him "up Fields." Wherefore he, as a "shadow," seeks enlightenment from his "substance,"

a slightly older boy, who has been detailed to instruct him in the mysteries of Westminster phraseology and practice during his first fortnight. From his " substance " he will learn that the warning he has received means that he is to be at Vincent Square for games at a certain time. He will learn, also, that a Westminster boy never goes " to " a place, but always " up " or " down." Incidentally, the terms " Fields " and " station " have been in constant use at Westminster since Queen Elizabeth sat on the throne of England.

Cricket, as a gentleman's game, is said to owe its popularity to the Playing Fields of Eton, the Meads of Winchester, and the Tuttle Fields of Westminster. Thus, in 1745, we find the great Lord Chesterfield urging his son to learn to play cricket better than any boy at Westminster, and three other Westminsters, the Duke of Dorset and his brothers Lords John and George Sackville, prominent in the game. The Duke was among those who drew up the rules upon which all subsequent revisions have been based, and in 1768 he captained a team of Old Westminsters who defeated a team of Old Etonians on Moseley Hurst. Of an even earlier date is the annual match between King's Scholars and Town Boys, while the first known match between Public Schools is that in 1796, when Westminster defeated Eton by 66 runs on Hounslow Heath. This match was repeated at Lord's in 1799, 1800 and 1801, Eton winning twice and drawing once.



[*Sport & General.*

H. L. DOHERTY.

Tradition has it that in those days Westminster cricketers wore straw hats, light blue ribbons, flannel jackets and white trousers ; but, apparently, Eton also favoured light blue, and there is a persistent tradition that Westminster rowed Eton for the choice of colour and, upon losing the race, adopted pink. In support of this legend it may be pointed out that Westminsters have taken pink for their colours ever since they first sported them in their race against Eton in 1837.

The School's oldest cricket fixture is that with the M.C.C. which started in 1833. The Charterhouse Match was first played in 1850, and among other schools now encountered are Radley, Wellington and Sherborne. The School's first blue was, I believe, C. G. Lane, who played in the Oxford Elevens of 1856, 1858–1860, and also rowed against Cambridge in 1858 and 1859. Since his time the School has turned out many famous cricketers, but owes much of its present prosperity to the sound coaching of S. H. Day, who was a master from 1903 to 1913, and to D. J. Knight and C. H. Taylor (O.W.), who came later.

From very earliest times we hear of Westminster boys playing football, first in the Cloisters and the Green, and later on the Tuttle Fields ; but whereas Eton, Winchester and Harrow evolved their own types of football, Westminster and Charterhouse almost certainly built up the present universally played code of Association Football.

In the early days combined play was not dreamed of, and it was the brilliant individualist who became famous, apart from which Westminster footballers have always been noted for their skill and cleverness. The earliest records of School matches date from 1857, when the Old Westminsters opposed the School. In the following year and up to 1863 the long-forgotten " Dingley Dell " club was played, and there were four

matches against Charterhouse in the sixties. The Charterhouse fixture became a permanent one in 1875, but Westminster seem to have held the whip hand until their opponents moved to Godalming and Charterhouse football rapidly improved. Since that time Westminster wins have been few and far between.

The first of the great Westminster footballers was that wonderful dribbler, R. W. S. Vidal, who captained Oxford and played for England in 1873. Four years later there were four old Westminsters in the Oxford team. Later came W. R. Moon, who " kept " for his University in four successive seasons and was among the finest goalkeepers the game has ever seen. S. S. Harris, afterwards Cambridge captain and brilliant International forward, played for the first time in the Westminster team of 1899.

In the fifties and sixties matches were played with both Harrow and Winchester, but both lapsed, and meanwhile there was a meeting with Eton for a few years after 1899. The Winchester match became a regular fixture from 1906 until it ceased during the War period, but has now happily been revived. Then there is the match between King's Scholars and Town Boys, not so old as the cricket match, but still able to trace back its history to 1854.

Westminster has produced also two Rugby Internationals in R. L. Aston and L. E. Barrington-Ward, while B. S. Schofield was in the Oxford team of 1921.

The School has a long rowing record, dating back to 1813, as contained in the King's Scholars' Water Ledgers. In 1825 a crew rowed from Westminster to Windsor and back. Having regard to the distance, it was a ridiculous thing to attempt and two of the boys collapsed, but the other six hung on to the finish. " Water " is the succinct term for rowing at Westminster, and boys, doubtless, began to " go on the water " long before the beginning of the nineteenth century. In fact, Warren Hastings once stated that he was a good " boatman " when he was at the School in 1740. And there are supporters for the Universities, Eton and Westminster parties who claim that their particular *alma mater* instituted boat-racing.

The great event in the Westminster year of long ago was the annual race with Eton, despite which it was not infrequently stopped by the respective headmasters. For instance, in 1831, Eton dared only announce their victory to Dr. Keate by leading up to him a St. Bernard dog decked out in blue ribbons ; while in 1838, when the Eton boat was at the post, the start was prevented by the Westminster headmaster locking up one of the Westminster crew in his boarding house and threatening two others with summary expulsion. Nine races, however, were rowed between 1829 and 1847, of which Eton won five and Westminster four. The most memorable was that of 1837. Westminster then finally adopted pink for their colours ; the course was from Datchet Bridge to a point a mile and a quarter downstream and back through the bridge. King William IV, a great patron of Eton, saw his favourites beaten by three and a half lengths. The Rev. W. Rogers, who rowed number 5 in the Eton boat, wrote afterwards : " The King . . . declared that the Eton boys lost because Dr. Hawtrey was looking on. The Eton boys in their turn said that their defeat was the immediate cause of the King's illness. . . . As soon as he saw that Westminster were ahead he pulled down the blinds and drove back to the Castle, which I do not think he afterwards left."



[*Sport & General.*

WESTMINSTER'S LAWN TENNIS STARS.

The brothers H. L. and R. F. Doherty must be numbered among the greatest of lawn tennis players.

The victories of 1845 and 1846 are especially noteworthy because Westminster was then at its lowest numerical ebb. The rudder of the 1846 boat is still preserved in the School Library.

The race lapsed from 1847 to 1860, when Westminster lost four times, for Eton rowing was just receiving the inspiration of Dr. Edmund Warre's coaching, whereas Westminster was suffering through the building of the Thames Embankment and the greatly increased river traffic which made rowing on the home water unsafe. Events, such as the Colquhoun and Junior Sculls and the King's Scholars and Town Boys races, continued to be decided at Wandsworth during a further twenty years, and then in 1884 the Headmaster, Dr. Rutherford, at the unanimous request of the masters, abolished "water" altogether. It was, however, revived in 1910 and there is now a boat-house at Putney and a boat club of over 100 boys. The First Eight enters for the Ladies' Plate at Henley and the Second Eight has a fixture with Eton Second Eight, but the time has not yet quite come for the First Eights to resume their meetings.

The School has turned out many famous oarsmen, but I have space for the mention of only two names, Sir Patrick Colquhoun and H. T. Steward, both of whom were presidents of Leander.

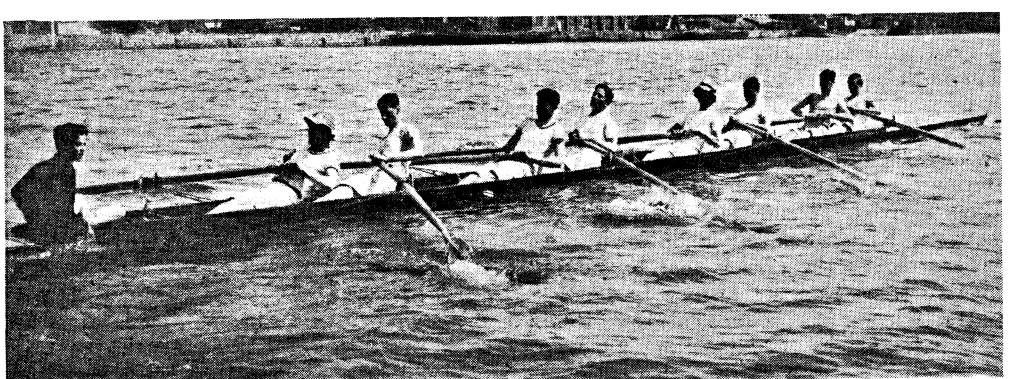
The chorus of a School Song for "Water," written by Wallace B. Nichols, runs:

"Forward all! And are you ready? Go!
Westminsters, Westminsters, roar it round about!
Though the tide may heavily flow,
And the wind may mightily blow,
Quicken up, reach out!
A stroke that is long and level and strong
Will send her along and along and along.
Then are you ready? Go!"

Modern "water" has much for which to thank the late Major D. P. Shaw, D.S.O., and Mr. A. H. Franklin, the present master who has charge of it and is himself an old blue.

For many years Westminster enjoyed its own peculiar form of rackets, played with a long-handled wooden bat against a blank wall of College. This game appears to be identical with that played by the unfortunate prisoners of the Fleet Prison. The game, however, began to decline with the opening of the proper Rutherford Memorial Court in 1905. Fives, of the Eton variety, has always been popular at Westminster.

There are also many spheres of sport in which Old Westminsters have proved their prowess. In the eighties and nineties, for example, the Old Westminsters' football teams made a fine show in the English Cup and also held the London Senior Cup for five years in succession. Then, of course, the famous brothers, R. F. and H. L. Doherty, two of the finest exponents of lawn tennis, were old boys of the School. Both won the All-England Singles Championship five times, and, together, they won the Doubles eight times and the Davis Cup twice. T. Mavrogordato was a worthy successor to them. A number of Old Westminsters, including H. W. Beveridge, G. P. Pakenham Walsh, H. Gardiner-Hill and the two Hartleys have represented Oxford or Cambridge at golf, and, in 1922, E. L. Clapham was in the English Hockey side. In 1906 C. Newton-Robinson, founder



[*Sport & General.*

"WATER."

A Westminster School Eight.

of the Epee Club and member of the Council of the Yacht Racing Association, represented Great Britain at the Olympic Games; as also, in 1908, did J. C. Ainsworth-Davis, the Cambridge blue, who was in our winning 1,600 metres relay team.

Westminster, indeed, has a great athletic tradition and always, like Eton and Harrow, gives excellent support to the Public Schools Sports Meeting, held annually in London in April. In 1914 the 1 Mile Challenge Cup was won by E. Besson, whom I had the pleasure of coaching together with Ainsworth-Davis and Alec Forbes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's nephew, that year. In 1923 M. F. Young took the Public Schools Half Mile in the excellent time of 2 min. 5⅗ sec.

Mention must also be made of the Officers Training Corps, which Captain A. T. Willett (O.W.) and, later, Major G. L. Troutbeck (O.W.) have brought to a high state of efficiency. In 1908 W. H. C. Hardy secured a medal in the Spencer Cup—I fancy he also won the "Greaze" one year—and in the following year both he and L. E. N. Ryan shot for Oxford. In 1920, at Bisley, Westminster beat Eton by 2 points for the Cadet Trophy and were also the runners-up in the Spencer Cup.

Finally, no account of Westminster would be complete without a reference to the "Greaze," as the Pancake Scramble is called. "Tossing the Pancake" is a queer custom which has survived from Elizabethan times, but no man knows what inspired the ceremony whereby, on Shrove Tuesday, the School *chef* pitches a pancake over a beam some thirty feet above the ground, nor why the boy who secures the largest portion in the ensuing "Greaze" should be conducted in state, preceded by a verger and a silver "poker," to the Dean, who rewards him with a guinea. In 1919 the ancient ceremony was witnessed by their Majesties the King and Queen, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York.

NEXT MONTH—SHREWSBURY.

Back Numbers containing the articles on ETON, HARROW, WINCHESTER and RUGBY can still be obtained. Future issues will include CHARTERHOUSE, CLIFTON, CHELTENHAM, HAILEYBURY, etc.

SONNET.

I SAW the swollen sun step out in red
From off the mystic mountain-crags afar.
I saw the passing of the Morning Star;
I saw her swoon upon her rosy bed.
I saw a cloud; O such a lovely sight!
Dissolve into a cerulean mist.
I saw a lonely peak by Helios kissed,
Reflect the sunbeams from his golden height.

I saw the morning dew-lamps on the lawn.
I saw the timid aspen's trembling leaf;
The weeping-willow, lovely in her grief;
Saw all the radiant glories of the morn.
I saw all these; but I saw vastly more;
I saw Norina at her garden door.

AROLDUS QUERCUS.

FLY-BY-DAY

By LEONARD DENZELL

ILLUSTRATED BY TOM PEDDIE

IT seemed to Peter Hemming, coming north over Waterloo Bridge, that he faced the most heartening picture in all London. Under the bright morning sun the river, full and vigorous, swirled and sparkled. Before him gleamed the gracious façade of Somerset House; beyond there was a glimpse of the roaring vitality of the Strand. And he was enjoying it to the full; after he had almost despaired of ever enjoying anything.

He still bore tokens of those days of despair. His soles weren't worn through but he could feel, too easily, the surface under them. His coat cuffs showed, just beneath the wrists, the first few bodeful threads—the warning of impending dissolution. A week ago these signs had sickened him. Now the Job—the miraculous job—had turned up, and he could face the world.

It was a good world, a world with work and play, air and sunlight, in it: a world graced also with many desirable things, books and etchings, and—Peter was a healthy young man—fine cars and pretty women. And—by Jove!—there were two of the finest together; a beautiful Grantley saloon with, at the wheel, a really charming girl. He didn't know which of them gave him the keener thrill.

But what were they doing, facing south on that stretch of Waterloo Bridge? Oh yes, an easy thing to do; she'd overshot the fork leading to the temporary section and had run nearly to the middle of the old bridge. And there she was, stuck, worried and embarrassed, facing an endless stream of north-bound traffic. It was a nasty hang-up—no joke having to reverse a big saloon for a hundred yards into the jam of cars at the fork.

That's what Daphne Carslake thought. She was a girl of pluck but she was very near to tears when Peter spoke to her.

"Rather a hole, I'm afraid. Can I help at all?" (Yes, she was charming and fine; with a firm, well-cut mouth and kind eyes under dark brows.)

"If you would. I do feel a fool." (And her voice had the soft, clear ring that we always trust.)

"Oh, a thing like that is as easy as hitting your thumb. Now, shall I drive or con you out?"

"If you'd con me out, please. I'll obey orders."

There followed a pretty bit of co-ordination. The car was beautifully responsive and the driver, her confidence restored, obeyed Peter's signals to an inch. In one clean sweep, just clear of the kerb, they reached the fork; and here Peter, with all due modesty, felt that he shone.

A suave gesture of his left hand swept the north-bound traffic aside. An authoritative one of the right stopped the other stream. The Grantley checked, came forward and took its proper station before the nearest policeman realised that there had been a tangle. Richer by half a crown and two disarming smiles, he went back to his routine while Peter, accepting an unspoken invitation, got into the car.

Arrived safely at the end of the bridge, the girl spoke to him. "Thank you so much. That was beautifully done."

"Please don't thank me. Indeed I have to thank you for a new experience. Now I know what got to Napoleon's head."

She smiled. "Can I take you anywhere?"

"Anywhere! Happily I'm quite free. And it does seem a pity to part so soon."

"Where shall it be?"

"The world is wide—this morning."

"Yes, I feel like that. Well, I'm supposed to be house-hunting . . . a place in Surrey. Will you come?"

"Come with you? I'm absolutely the man you need. I'm wonderfully sound on south aspects and things, and the proper place for the dog-kennel."

"I'm so glad we met. I'm never really safe about that."

"Good, we'll crack a crazy pavement together."

The big car, well handled, made short work of the southern suburbs and soon they were revelling in the fine sweeps of the Portsmouth road. Sun and air, and the flashing landscape, touched their spirits to harmony. Friendship, instinctive and unquestioned, grew and perfected itself.

Where the road crossed a wide heath Daphne brought the car to a halt and turned to Peter.

"You know," she said, "I simply daren't take you to the house without knowing your name. It would offend the lares."

"I'm afraid it would. And lares are so respectable in Surrey."

"Well, somebody has to be."

"Very well then—Peter Hemming . . . very much at your service."

"Daphne Carslake . . . and charmed to know you."

"Daphne Carslake . . . how exactly like you."

"I rather like it myself, you know—so I'll take that as a compliment."

"It's only right that you should."

She smiled. "Now . . . go on. I don't really know you yet."

"Please 'mm, I was born of poor but honest parents . . ."

"I know, who died in your infancy. At the age of fourteen you were apprenticed to a butter patter . . ."

"No, a glue boiler."

"Of course, I'd forgotten. Throwing yourself with youthful zeal into your work you soon mastered the intricacies of that noble but arduous profession . . ."

"You've forgotten the subtler side of a singularly fascinating personality. There were my artistic triumphs."

"I'm coming to those. A double first in poker-work, wasn't it?"

"Yes, and honours in ventriloquism. My work with two dummies brought tears to the eyes of Winston Churchill. He gave the prizes, you know."

"I adore genius. Simple village maiden as I am, I can only arrange the flowers for mother. How I envy you your triumphs."

"'"Child, you don't know what you're saying" . . . he muttered between his clenched teeth, and went out into the night.'"

"You've won." She started the car. "Now we'll get on to the job. I said I was house-hunting, but I suppose it's settled. George, poor dear, is so awfully busy. . . ."

"George?"

"My fiancé—his name's Duhamel—he asked me to see about the wallpapers, and so on."

Peter said nothing. Silly, of course, but he hadn't imagined a fiancé. He felt a little dashed.

"This is his car, by the way."

"Lucky beggar," said Peter aloud, and to himself: "There is one and one and a shadowy third." It made the figure of the absent uncomfortably real.

She turned off the main road and—after a little—pulled up, saying, "Here it is."

"It's pretty."

"Y-es, it's pretty . . ."

"But a bit nouveau Surrey, eh?"

She shot a sidelong glance. "You're a bit of a demon, you know."

"Pray pardon the unpardonable."

"Yes, forgiven. Perhaps the unpardonable is useful sometimes."

Peter took her hand—strong and nervous within its glove—to help her out. She rose from the low seat with an easy grace and stepped out of the car like a young and smiling queen. The sunlight showed a glimpse of dark gleaming hair and lit up eyes of rich hazel. She was tall—nearly as tall as himself—with the firm lines and free aspect of a Diana. "Diana in silk," he thought.

The first thing you noticed about the house was its newly washed look. It had a roof of vermilion tiles sloping in many different directions, and too many gables, all half-timbered. In front were carefully tended shrubs, paths of deep red gravel and plushy turf.

It was pleasant enough within. Where it wasn't white paint it was oak panelling. The window bays were rather deliberately deep and comfortable; the doors and fireplaces conscientiously archaic.

Daphne went over it carefully and thoroughly. In imagination she placed the furniture, covered walls and hung curtains; deciding effects with a realism and certainty that held Peter amazed.

"How do you do it?" he asked.

"Do what?"

"See it all like that? Scheme it all out? Put everything where it should be? It beats me, I couldn't furnish a hen-house."

"Easy enough when you've fed for six months on catalogues and lived in showrooms."

She sighed, a sigh that illuminated him. It was the note—and the interpretation—of what had vaguely troubled and depressed him. She was doing the job well, very well; but not with an eager heart. She was furnishing a house, not delightedly playing with a toy, or . . . building a nest.

Later there came a more significant note. From the verandah they were looking over the garden. It was perfect—or, at least, all that it should be. There were crazy pavements, a pergola, a sundial, a mosaic pool . . . herbaceous borders and trim, trim lawns. Beyond the green hard court was a vista of golf-links. It was the setting of a musical comedy.

Daphne took it all in at a glance. "George will love this," she said.

The emphasis revealed a little too much, and Peter anathematised the man for a dolt. "Hanged if I'd let my girl go over a house without me," he thought; "it isn't human."

They returned to the car. "Will you take the wheel?" she said.

"The wheel of that beauty? I didn't dare to ask."

"If you will, please. I want to sit back and rest."

Peter settled her into the car and took the driver's seat. The car was all that he had hoped. The wheel was just the height it ought to be; the controls fell to his hands; the pedals caressed his feet and went forward silkily. The starter gave one short, purposeful buzz and the engine took up its work.

"Back again?" he said.

"We'll run round a little first if you don't mind."

"Good, I know the place." He slipped in gears that moved like the action of a safe and started off.

He left the highway and followed a sandy heath road for half a mile, pulling up at last beside a little wood. They left the car and walked through pine, beech and hazel to where a group of silver birch was reflected in a vivid pool.

"Oh!" said Daphne, "it's the 'Never, Never, Never Land' out of 'Peter Pan'!"

"It's delightful of you to say that. It's what I always called it."

The day was utterly still: beneath the warm sun the scent of pine and heather filled the place with a wholesome incense. Daphne breathed deep.

"What a glorious, pagan day," she said. "I'd like to strip off all my things and plunge into that pool."

"Heigho! 'Respectability, the tyrant's plea.'"

"Heigho! as you say. . . . Now we'll sit down and you'll tell me your real story."

"'Story, Lord love you, I have not one to tell, sir!'"

"Mr. Hemming, we're friends now and I'm going to be frank. You're poorer than you should be—therefore there's a story."

"Too commonplace. I was hardly more than a boy in '14. The vital five years of a man's life were wiped out."

"Couldn't you pick up?"

"There was nothing to pick up. The family business—and my father—were accounted for by the same Zeppelin bomb."

"How dreadful!"

"It was stiff. So I scratched away in the usual way. However, there was one thing . . ." He chuckled. "Mark me well—'You may not look upon my like again. . . .' I was the one who didn't try poultry farming."

"You alarm me, such originality."

"A mere flash. I *did* plant rubber . . . until blackwater got me and I had to leave the Tropics."

"And then?"

"Oh, one sells things . . . maps, safety razors, ingenious gadgets for the home . . . vacuum cleaners . . ."

He tightened the clasp of his hands round his knees with a sort of smiling shudder and Daphne's heart went out to him. "I was right," she thought, "he *is* a dear." Aloud she said: "Is that 'selling things' still going on?"

"No, praise Heaven. I ran into one of my old mess and he put me up for a job—a real job—with prospects. It seems too good to be true, especially as it only needs horse sense. Oh, and honesty; I shall have to handle a good deal of money. Decent of a chap to do it, when he only knows me slightly."

"I suppose you only saved his life or some little thing like that?"

"No, I just lent him books and made him laugh."

"Then you did save his life."

"Oh, it was easy to make a man laugh then. Not like nowadays, by Jove!"

"Have you started?"

"I start next week."

"I'm glad of that, because I can wish you luck—Peter."

"Thank you; now I shall have it."

"Peter, now that it is over—I feel sure that it is over—you ought to . . ."



"'Oh!' said Daphne, 'it's the "Never, Never, Never Land" out of "Peter Pan"!'"

"Please don't say that I ought to be grateful."

"I wouldn't be so banal, my dear." The little endearment was used with a high unconsciousness, in the happy spirit of the hour. "Still, I think you ought to value it properly. You've done things and found yourself. You've lived . . . and got a soul."

"Queer sort of soul comes of that."

"Now, look at me."

"Truly, I've looked at little else."

"Ignored with deserved contempt. Of course, I can buy pretty things and I go to the right places—generally in big cars. And I have money of my own. But, oh, Peter, Father is a K.C.—and very little else, poor dear. Mother is rather a darling in her way, but the Vicar and the *Morning Monitor*! I have a circle of friends—or I suppose I have. I know a fair number of men—and I wish someone would help me to tell one from another. . . . They've all been to the right schools. . . ."

"Yes, curse it."

"And on the right occasions they say the right things. Heavens! I could scream at times. I don't think I've had half an hour's solid talk with any of them. Do men talk to women?"

"Some seem to have a difficulty. I've found it easy enough."

"You would. You're not scared, you're instinctively friendly." She paused for a while: then she summed up. "So there it is; you've lived while I . . . I've played tennis and got engaged."

It was a telling epitome, on the verge of telling too much. Peter judged it time to suggest their return. She agreed, a little wistfully; and they left the tiny wood with a sense, almost, of farewell.

"I'm parking in St. James's Square," said Daphne.

"So it's 'good-bye'? For the present only, I hope."

"Certainly not. I can't lose you yet. I want you to have luncheon with me—and meet George."

"Thanks, indeed. I shall be awfully happy to do that."

Peter wasn't surprised when she led him to the Ritz; still less so when he saw George Duhamel. George was a tall, good-looking man; slightly oval and slightly pink. He apparently had his hair cut daily. By happy chance his school colours were dark, so he wore them with his perfect morning clothes. It was the only social risk he ever took.

He was good enough not to raise his eyebrows when Peter was introduced, and seconded her invitation with well-drilled cordiality. Daphne watched the two men with a trace of anxiety. She glanced back over her morning with astonishment and almost a trace of panic. After all . . . It would be awful if Peter didn't "do."

The anxiety passed. His smile, his fluent hands, his manner of breaking bread, were enough. He met George's eye with unstressed coolness and the happy deference proper towards a new acquaintance who was also a host. As the meal progressed, under cover of desultory talk, she found herself studying and weighing the two men. Slowly, incredulously, she found herself forming a judgment or—at least—harbouring an amazing thought. Was it possible that, by contrast, George mightn't "do"? He more than "passed"; he was palpably one to whom luncheon at the Ritz was mere routine. But would he ever have that . . . sparkling calm, that air of a sufficing philosophy lightly worn?

"Dreaming, Daph?"

"A little." She roused herself to listen to the men's talk.

"Beautiful car of yours, Mr. Duhamel."

"Yes, a nice 'bus; I like her. But I'd like the money more. Fifteen hundred pounds she cost me and it'd be handy just now."

"Oh, you're not hard up, are you, George? And here I'm spending your money right and left. I'm so sorry." Daphne was prettily remorseful.

"No, not hard up, but a very sound thing has come my way, just when my money's all tied up. I can't lay my hands on a cent, and here's a man come and pushed a good thing right into my hand. I could clear a nice little rake-off if I had the price of that car—but not the second-hand price. Things always turn up like that, don't they, Mr. Hemming?"

Peter smiled sympathy and acquiescence; calling himself hypocrite and sycophant the while.

"Truly hard luck," he said.

George turned to Daphne. "Can't you lose it, Daph? Throw it away, skid it over a bank, set fire to it, or something?"

"George, you pirate!"

"Bit of a burden, conscience," said Peter.

"Lud, yes . . . I suppose I shall have to

let it go. But Heavens! if it was easy to get away with it I should be tempted."

The subject was dropped and George sought a new one. He surveyed the room and philosophised. "Queer couples you see in a place like this. It's what I always say—a woman can never tell a cad."

He was right—it was what he always said—and he entertained the impression that nobody else had. Daphne was conscious of a sharp revolt. Was it Peter's presence—his considering smile—that made George appear so complacent?

Whatever revealed it, the complacency was there: it had to be met and checked. "I don't think you're right," she said, "men make just the same mistakes—if they are mistakes—but when we see a man with a woman cad we merely shrug our shoulders. It's expected, it's allowed for by the double standard."

"The double standard! What d'you mean?"

"Of morality."

This would never do. It trenched on the indecent, and George was nothing if not decent.

"I don't quite understand you, Daphne."

"It's simple. A woman mustn't go about with a cad, because it's dangerous, it spoils her market. With a man it doesn't matter. *Voilà tout!*"

"You're putting it very crudely. There's much more in it than that."

"Oh yes, there's female delicacy and all that sort of thing. I know."

"I may be a bit old-fashioned——"

"Well, if you're that you ought to believe in feminine intuition."

"I do," said George, with the emphasis of a man who is not quite sure; "but not in that connection. I still hold that a woman's judgment is never absolutely sound."

"Generalities, my dear George. Some women can't tell, some can. I can."

"Even you—I beg your pardon—but I doubt whether even you could always be sure. I don't blame you, of course."

"That's good of you. Well, I say it's all a matter of having the instinct. If a woman can tell a decent man at sight she can tell a cad."

"I wouldn't mind admitting that. I merely say that women haven't that instinct."

"Haven't they? Look here,"—Daphne was carried beyond all discretion—"what do you think of Mr. Hemming?"

Peter saw what was coming.

"Really, you know, Miss Carslake," he said, "this isn't fair to Mr. Duhamel. He *has* to say that I'm all right."

Daphne fixed George with a belligerent eye. "What do you say, George?"

"Dash it all, Daphne. It's a difficult position and I don't know why you're asking me. He's all right, of course. . . . You'll excuse me, Mr. Hemming?"

"Well then, I never saw him until this morning!"

George's position was hard. Daphne was roused and merciless; and his manners were good. Between the two he was helpless.

"My dear Daphne!" he said. It was practically all he *could* say, but it might lead to any sort of explosion. It was up to Peter to do his best.

"Yes, Mr. Duhamel, I'm afraid that is so. You see . . ."

"It was like this, George, Peter here . . .'

"Peter!"

"I'm sorry, it just slipped out. Mr. Hemming got me out of a nasty hole . . ."

"It wasn't a rescue, you know. . . . I can't take credit for that sort of thing . . ."

"It happened this way; I got tied up in a bad traffic tangle and Mr. Hemming guided me out. That was all."

"I see. Well . . .?" His sonorous note condemned both culprits.

"Well, you see, I had to ask Mr. Hemming if I could take him anywhere."

"You quite see that that was natural, Mr. Duhamel?"

"So I did and we started talking, and it was awfully interesting; so I ran him down to the house."

"I hope that Mr. Hemming approved of it?" For a beginner in the use of irony George was by no means ineffective.

"Oh, quite a good house. I liked it very much."

"That relieves my mind. But *hadn't* you a destination?"

"No, you see I'm out of a job just for the moment."

"I *see*."

Daphne rushed in to avert the cold implication.

"That's all right; Mr. Hemming starts a new job next week . . . quite a good one."

"And, I'm afraid, Mr. Duhamel, I shall have to be taken on my face value—for what it's worth. My people were just ordinary decent folk—lived in Croydon, as a matter of fact—and I went to a grammar

school. That cuts out a useful reference. My old regimental mess are scattered, those who lived through. So there it is—nothing to be done. . . . 'Sorry."

Daphne's voice was quietly final. "There's nothing to be done—so we'll do nothing." In a lighter tone she went on: "George, I know you're busy this week-end. I'm going down to Littledean."

"I don't know why you go to that lost hole. It'd bore me stiff."

"I like it because it *is* lost. It's splendid to be out of reach of the telephone and all that it means."

"Ah well, tastes differ. What train?"

"The three-thirty."

"The three-thirty? Do you mind if I don't see you off?"

"Quite all right. I know that you're awfully full up."

"Thanks." George made an effort and did the thing handsomely. "I dare say Mr. Hemming will see you to the train?"

"Thanks indeed, sir." Peter acknowledged the gesture. "I shall be very pleased, of course."

As the two went off to retrieve their hats George turned to him with a quaintly instinctive appeal for masculine sympathy.

"Queer things, women. Daphne's the best thing going, but she does mad-headed things. . . ."

He pulled himself up, recalling the latest "mad-headed thing." Peter helped him out with a grin and "Oh, we all do at times . . . and we ought to. It does us good."

When they rejoined Daphne it was only to make adieux. George did it handsomely to the last.

"Good-bye, Mr. Hemming. I suppose you two will manage to amuse each other until three-thirty."

As his taxi moved away Daphne turned to Peter.

"A very good sport," she said. "I gave him a jar, poor dear."

"A sport indeed, and not the only one. I thought you were plucky to recklessness."

"I suppose I was reckless. I had to do it, though. Quite suddenly I found that I had to make a stand."

"Where shall we go now?"

"We'll put up the car first; then we'll find somewhere where we can talk. George isn't the only one who's had a jar. . . . I'm bewildered, Peter. . . . I'm frightened. . . ."

The garage was near Sloane Square. From there, at Peter's instance, they made their way towards the Tate. Daphne, however, didn't talk. She was deep in thought; through Chelsea and beside the shining river they shared the silence of old friends.

At the Gallery it was the same. Peter showed her some of his favourites, with short and vivid comments. Daphne smiled sympathy and companionship but said little until they stood before "The Return from the Ride." Together they savoured the spacious charm and noble manner that a thousand half-tones haven't spoiled. She turned to Peter gravely.

"Those two loved each other," she said.

She sighed and they moved away. Peter looked at his watch.

"By Jove!" he said, "it's four o'clock. What about your train?"

"It doesn't matter. I'll catch a later one. Now will you give me tea, please?"

When they had settled in a quiet corner, "Peter," she said, "do you remember what I said this morning about myself?"

"That you'd 'played tennis and got engaged'? I remember it very well."

"There was something else. We also need experience, Peter, and we try to get it. One way I tried was to go to the Slade. I didn't get far—I've simply no talent of that kind—but it was worth it. I made one or two good women friends and I . . ."

"Found experience?"

"Yes, I did. It's strange how little there is actually to tell; how little there seemed to be in it. Merely a few teas, a few dances—one or two walks over the Downs. . . . It was a man, of course. He wasn't an artist but he moved amongst them. And he was clever, satanically clever. I think he was a pure anarchist. He took everything I thought and believed and turned it inside out. Then he would laugh quietly."

"A bit disturbing."

"Try to imagine what that meant to a girl. You're seasoned gradually, but we aren't. For me it was catastrophic—and intoxicating. I can't give you the quality. I must leave that to your imagination. He was quite respectful too: but you felt that that was just 'the custom of the country,' just another charming folly to be smiled at. I felt stripped, stripped of everything a woman ought to have; all the little delicate veils that we still cling to—that we still need—even to-day. And I felt that it didn't matter, because I was just as bad one way as the other. He only kissed me once, and that was when he went away. And when he kissed me I knew how far I'd

gone. I thanked Heaven when the boat moved away and I found myself on the quay."

"You thanked Heaven . . . and you cried."

"Of course. . . . So after that I just played tennis and got engaged. You can't tell how comforting and 'safe' it all felt."

Peter noticed the past tense. Was safety in turn losing its charm? It wasn't his business, of course. . . . He sat silent, appalled at the huge demands that modern girls made on life, made by the mere fact of their developed being. Perhaps it was tragic, perhaps absurd. . . . No, she was a princess—she ought to have it all.

The silence between them grew. He wanted to break it—it seemed dangerous—but anything he could think of seemed hopelessly clumsy. He had a sense of respite when she spoke again.

"Do you remember the end of 'Lamia'? —when the philosopher looked at her . . . and she and her house, and all the company changed; changed and faded away?"

"You're no serpent."

"I hope not, but for the rest . . . You are the philosopher, Peter. You've merely looked . . . and my house and friends have faded away. I believe I have too."

"I . . . I've said nothing."

"There was no need."

For a while she said no more but sat with her hands clasped, in visible and heartrending distress. Then she spoke, in a pitiful sighing whisper:

"Peter . . . Peter . . . take me away."

"Daphne! . . . What do you mean?"

"Poor Peter . . . nothing dreadful. But I must go away . . . somewhere where they can't find me. I must think things out. It's all my life, Peter. I think I can say that I have to save my soul."

Peter's head swam. He just managed "Anything to serve you, but——" when she came to his rescue with a lighter tone.

"Will you please get the car? Leave me here. I shall have thought of something when you come back. And I'll ask you to get my things from Victoria."

As if in a dream he went to do her bidding. He felt a crushing depression, but underlying it was a strange quiet thrill of excitement and a stranger sense of strength.

When he returned she was standing on the steps of the Gallery. A light breeze moulded her dress against her figure and, looking up, he thought of the Victory of Samothrace. But no, *her* wings were drooped. Splendid herself, she was not poised for splendid flight.

She entered the car and settled down by his side. "Will you make for the Uxbridge road, please?" she said. "I know now what I want to do."

Going across London she said nothing, and Peter, taking an unfamiliar car through traffic, was glad enough to be silent. He looked inquiry at her once or twice, but not until they were clear of the town did she speak.

"It's in the Cotswolds. I'll tell you how to get there. I sent a wire to an old friend. I knew her at the Slade. She paints, and she is a blessing. She won't ask feminine questions."

On smooth wide roads, at a steady, effortless forty-five, they ran through the perfect evening; Peter at least wrapped in a huge content. It warmed his heart to see that she seemed happy, seemed to be at peace. She scarcely spoke but rested against his arm; and from time to time gave him an untroubled smile. Once she turned to face him fully and said, "I must have at least three weeks. I think that I shall know by then."

It was like the ending of a lovely tale when he heard her say, "Here it is." He pulled up at a small house of warm grey stone, backed by a hanging wood. A tall woman with deep brows and slightly greying hair stood at the gate to greet them.

George Duhamel had had a tiring day. A run in the car before dinner struck him as just what he needed. He rang up the garage.

"Hello! That you, Atkins? Duhamel speaking. You might send the car round to my office."

"Your car, Mr. Duhamel? It isn't in."

"Not in?"

"It came in at about two-thirty, but it went out again at half-past five."

"Oh, about five-thirty, you say? Who took it out?"

"The gentleman who brought it in. I don't remember him very well. He came in with Miss Carslake."

"Oh yes. Was Miss Carslake with him the second time?"

"No, Mr. Duhamel."

"Ah! Did he take any petrol?"

"Yes, filled up."

"Oh! Well, I see I shall have to do without her. Right, thanks."

George hung up the receiver, looking very

thoughtful. Might be all right, of course, but still . . . queer, distinctly queer. Daphne didn't know the man. He looked decent enough . . . but then a lot of fellows did look decent—especially if they'd held commissions. If—of course he only meant "if"—the chap meant to steal the car, that was just how he'd do it. He'd see Daphne off to the train and then come back and pick the thing up. Deucedly good move to take it into the garage first in her company. It enabled him to fill up without rousing suspicion or being noticed. Cool hand—dashed cool hand or entirely innocent. Daphne might have changed her mind, might have got him to drive her down to Littledean instead of taking the train. Yes, that would be it, of course.

He felt relieved—for five minutes. Then his suspicions returned. There was a lot of car-stealing going on; no harm in letting the police know. If it was all right it *was* all right. He would explain; if necessary apologise. The chap Hemming would understand. Meanwhile the car was worth fifteen hundred.

He took up the receiver again.

At ten o'clock Peter finally decided that he really must go.

Daphne's old friend had taken the invasion with a smiling philosophy obviously native to her. There had been a few—a very few—words of explanation and a charming welcome; a simple supper, excellent coffee, and friendly, familiar talk.

Well, all things had to end; and London was three hours away.

"Peter," said Daphne in farewell, "it's been a wonderful day. I'm worried to death, but I'm very grateful. I shall never forget it."

"Nor I."

She took both his hands. "If you see George you won't say where I am? I'll write to-morrow. I shall tell him that I'm all right but that he mustn't try to find me. You know, Peter, it's really serious. It's the most serious thing in my life. Good-bye, my dear . . . I think you were sent from Heaven."

"Good-bye." Peter got into the car and shut the door, shutting it—as he felt—on the most delightful of worlds.

Well, all the delights weren't over yet. A glorious night had succeeded a magnificent day. Before him the road gleamed like steel; under him he had a superb car. He settled back in the seat and let her out.

Half an hour later—with twenty-five miles behind him—he saw a dark figure in the middle of the road. He sounded the horn but the figure stayed where it was. "Dashed fool," he thought. Then in the flash of the headlights he noted brass buttons and a flat cap.

"Oho! Police. Is this trouble or does he want a lift?"

He pulled up smoothly beside the policeman.

"Evening, officer. Anything I can do?"

"If you don't mind, sir. I'm looking for a car."

"Oh yes. What's the trouble?"

"Just a general warning, sir. A car missing from London and we've got to keep our eyes open."

"I see. What sort of car?"

"Rather like this one, sir. A big saloon, grey with black top. Number . . . I'll just look at your number if I may, sir."

The policeman walked towards the front of the bonnet. He was a man of sense and, while reading the number, he kept clear of the car. You never knew . . . Then he opened the near-side door and sat down beside Peter. His manner had changed.

"Now, if you don't mind, young man, we'll drive to the station."

"Eh? What's that?"

"Yes, it's the one we want. I didn't think I should have this luck."

"You don't think I've pinched the thing?"

"The owner thinks you have."

"You mean Mr. Duhamel?"

"I mean the owner."

"If I'd scarped it I should hardly know the owner's name, should I?"

"Perhaps not. Unless you'd looked at that set of maps there. See, 'G. W. Duhamel?'"

"Holmes, this is wonderful."

"I'll have you know, young fellow, that my name is Bartholomew."

"Sorry, nothing meant. Merely a classical allusion."

"I'm just warning you. It might be used against you."

"Sporting of you. But, my dear chap, I'm driving the thing back to Mr. Duhamel."

"You're driving it back to London, but London's a big place. You may be quite honest or you may be just cunning. What's Mr. Duhamel ring us up for? Answer me that."

It was a bit of a facer. Why had Duhamel called in the police? Then, all of a sudden,

it took Peter between the eyes. Duhamel suspected him . . . *and there was no reason why he shouldn't.*

The policeman broke in on his painful meditation. "However, it can all be explained at the station."

"Quite." It could all be explained at the station. A night in the cells hurt nobody, rather a lark, in fact. . . . Explanations in the morning and apologies all round. That was all right.

Yes, that was all right. But . . . was it? The situation broke on Peter in its full beauty. It was true enough; in Duhamel's eyes he'd stolen the car, or attempted to do so.

He pulled up. It might look suspicious, but he'd got to stop and think. To cover it he offered the policeman a cigarette. "Smoke, officer? At the price I give it can't be regarded as a bribe. And they're not so bad as to constitute a threat—so we can both keep our consciences clear."

They lit up, and Peter plunged into thought. Yes, there it was. Absurd as it might be, if Duhamel cared to press the charge, then he, Peter, was done. The truth—incredible and bewildering to an honest man—that he might actually go to jail, sent him cold.

He took himself in hand. This wouldn't do: this was panic. And, of course, Daphne could clear him with a word. Then came realisation, complete and crushing. Daphne could clear him with a word . . . and he could never ask her to speak it!

Daphne! He could see her piteous face, could hear her voice, "Peter . . . take me away. . . . I think I can say that I have to save my soul. . . ."

If he got Daphne into the thing it might be simply fatal for her. George, George's family, her family—he could see them all. Defenceless and bewildered, she would have to meet their massed attack. She had committed a blazing indiscretion and got mixed up with a shady character. "Poor Daphne needs looking after," he could hear the chorus. The date of the wedding was probably fixed—she was furnishing the house—and on that point terrible pressure would be applied. She would be delivered bound to the furies of respectability and consigned to some suburban Hades.

No, it wouldn't do. Daphne had to be saved—given a chance to save herself.

And after all—Peter's ironic soul whispered—she might marry George of her own free will.

He couldn't afford to play with that idea—he'd a soul of his own to save. He preferred to think that, possibly, he might get off. Then he drank the last drop of his cup.

Even supposing that he got off, how much good would that do him? He had committed a mad, an inexplicable, freak. He was a rogue or a lunatic . . . and his job was hopelessly gone! A picture of the future flashed mercilessly into his mind; hopeless looking for work, "selling things" . . . corrosive, poisonous, despair. . . . He leaned forward on to the wheel with an audible groan.

The policeman finished his cigarette. "What about the station, young man? It's best not to make a fuss."

The car's movement and the wind against his face altered his mood. Why should he go quietly? He'd be hanged if he would be resigned. He'd make a dash of some sort and, if he was finished, finish fighting. His spirit rose, and with spirit came inspiration. By Jove! it wasn't only fighting—it was policy. If he could shake off this bobby, if he could dodge or rush any others he met, then he might be safe. If he could get anywhere near the garage—then he was merely returning the car. A few words to George—even to the garage man—would set him right. The whole aspect of the affair would change . . . if——

Now to dodge the bobby—violence if necessary, but strategy first. He pulled up again, slipped into neutral, and spoke.

"Officer, I find the wind a bit chilly; I think we'll close the screen. You might unscrew the fixture on your side. You'll find it a bit stiff."

The policeman turned to oblige: and next moment the door had slammed between him and Peter, who was bursting through the roadside hedge. Peter had burnt his boats—he must put the thing through now.

With a sort of desperate joy he dashed across a ploughed field. It was heavy going, but heavier for the policeman, who was a bulky man. Clearing a stile into mowing grass, Peter had a useful lead in hand. Turning sharply, he skirted the hedge until he was clear of the plough. Then he broke through to a smooth pasture, heading for the road and the loom of the car's headlights.

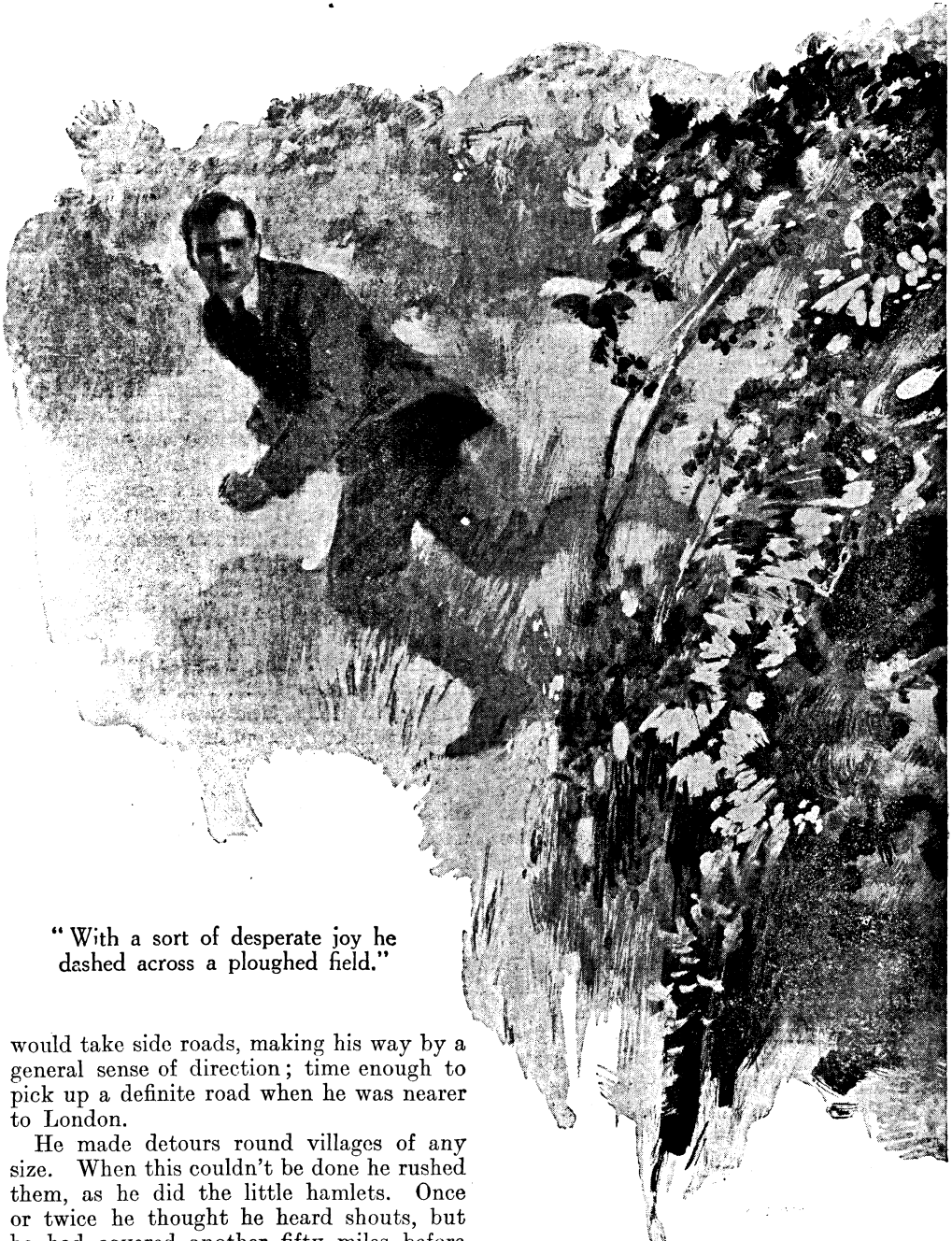
With twenty yards to the good he leapt into the driving-seat. Gears and clutch went in, the glorious engine opened up on the instant and he got away—to the sound of a blasting valediction almost in his ear.

So far, quite good—but he'd have to leave the main roads. The hunt was up and—when that policeman reached the telephone—pursuit would be really hot. He would take side roads, making his way by a general sense of direction; time enough to pick up a definite road when he was nearer to London.

He made detours round villages of any size. When this couldn't be done he rushed them, as he did the little hamlets. Once or twice he thought he heard shouts, but he had covered another fifty miles before there was a definite attempt to stop him.

Again a policeman waved. Peter slowed down—the ideal law-abiding motorist—and lowered the window. "What's that, officer?" he said as he crawled alongside. Then he gave the engine all she'd take. . . .

Perfectly simple; all that was needed was politeness, address . . . and a dashed good engine. In the next forty miles he had brought it off three times and he began to feel some real confidence of success. The suburbs—that he would soon be approach-



"With a sort of desperate joy he dashed across a ploughed field."

ing—might even be safer: more police would be set off by more side roads.

Rounding a sharp bend, he ran into the outskirts of a village before he could look for a detour. It was a biggish place, it had a police station; and the station was noticeably a centre of activity. A group of men—and a large car—stood in front of the lighted doorway. Awkward, very—would the method succeed?"

In part it did. Peter slipped past and got away at a good pace: but someone read his back plate and yelled "That's him." He was away, but—there was the other car. In a passing glance he had noted that it was another Grantley . . . and it had a sports body! It was more than doubtful if he had the heels of her.

But he had the start, and a start counted

for much. Beyond the village the road was twisting and pretty rough. So much to the good. Peter reckoned that nobody could go faster than he—and keep the road. There was a mile or two of this and then, with a dramatic suddenness, he had swung on to a wide arterial highway that swept magnificently across open country.

Now there was nothing for it but speed, and speed he had—all that the splendid Grantley could give him. He reached a glorious eighty, the road swaying before him; gliding at and under the car with a smooth, hypnotic rush. If the other man was doing better he could *drive*.

He *was* doing better. The road in front of Peter was growing lighter. Fence posts, wayside trees and grasses, were showing a white glow that didn't come from his own headlights. Then the following car shot a bright beam through his rear window. It struck the driving mirror and came full into Peter's eyes. Almost blinded, he instinctively released the throttle. In a moment he had recovered; he pressed the pedal again and leaned forward out of the glare. But the moment had been fatal. Out of the corner of his eye he saw a radiator. In a very little while it was beyond the door, then it was level with his own. . . .

The other driver was a man of parts and determination. He had started the chase as a good citizen, firmly but soberly bent on vindicating the law. Fifteen crowded minutes had changed him into a demon—lost to everything but the splendour and glory of the chase. He yelled—through the hurricane of their passage the words reached Peter—"Pull up, you dog, or I'll push you off the road." He emphasised his words with a vicious little swerve.

Well, theft was bad enough; Peter wasn't in for murder or suicide. He edged towards the footpath. The zealot at the wheel made another lunge. Beyond the footway was a wide stretch of turf. Peter took to this, praying that his brakes might hold. They held well, and the car—bucking like a mule for fifty yards—broke slantwise into a frail fence and came to rest.

The pursuing car shot ahead, while Peter sat limp and cold in his seat. Beyond the fence was . . . nothing; just a moonlit blank and a little summer mist.

He was roused by the lights of the other car sweeping across him as it turned. He left his seat and waited by the roadside. The car pulled up; a sergeant and a constable—followed by the driver—came up to him. The driver spoke first.

"That was a dashed close thing. Why didn't you pull up?"

Peter addressed the sergeant. "I'll explain later. Perhaps you can get into touch with the owner. It's a Mr. Duhamel."

"It can all be explained at the station, young man."

It sounded like the refrain of a song. Did all policemen say that? Automatically he replied, "I'll go quietly."

There was a short discussion as to procedure. Finally the sergeant decided that he and the constable should be driven by Peter, with the other car in front as a useful check on any funny work.

"It's all right, sergeant," said Peter; "my funny work is over, I assure you." Then he heard a sharp crack behind him and turned round. The others grabbed at him, but he took no heed. "Look at the car!" he called out, and tried to break away.

The dark mass of the saloon was slowly moving. The ground and the broken fence had given way and the car was toppling over. The four men rushed to save her, but it was hopeless. They could only scrabble vainly at the panels and then jump back to save themselves from the vicious upward swing of the wheels.

It was swift tragedy. The shattered fence shrieked, there was a sliding rush, a few bumps and then . . . a great uprush of flame from fifty feet below.

Peter swore, a long comprehensive curse informed with his exasperation, his grief for a beautiful thing destroyed, and his personal despair. Then, with all the life gone out of him, he took his place in the sporting car.

They were soon at the police station; a place of echoing footsteps, the smell of washed tiles, and an official voice asking questions.

"I suppose," Peter asked the Inspector, "it's for Mr. Duhamel to make the charge?"

"Yes."

"Can you get into touch with him?"

"I'll try Headquarters."

In a little while he came from the telephone to tell Peter that Duhamel was coming out. The other driver—once more the sober citizen—left his name and departed in a roar of exhaust. Peter sat down. He was worn out and could only let the waves of black despair close over him.

It was nearly an hour afterwards that he was roused by the opening of the door;

and the station was irradiated by the presence of George. Wonderful man . . . ! Even at that hour he seemed to be newly shaved and fresh from the tub.

"Good evening, Inspector."

"Good evening, sir—or good morning. We've got him."

"So I see. Good. Well, Hemming, how about it?"

"Could you give me a few minutes, Mr. Duhamel? I think I could explain."

"I don't see how you can. Still, I don't mind. What were you doing with the car?"

"I was bringing it back to the garage."

"Oh . . . were you? Where is it, by the way?"

"It's gone."

"Gone! What d'you mean?"

"It's smashed. Went over into a quarry or something and then burnt up."

"How's that?"

Peter explained, with the police supplying emendations. George listened with close attention, asked pertinent questions, got the whole thing clear.

"Hm," he said, in a sort of summing up, "so you left the car there and afterwards it toppled over?"

"Yes, that was how it was."

"Burnt out, you say. Altogether you made a job of her, so to speak?"

"I'm afraid I did."

A change came over George. He gave Peter a look that seemed to carry a meaning and then—bland, explanatory, almost cordial—he addressed the Inspector.

"I see, Inspector, there has been a most extraordinary mistake. My friend Mr. Hemming took the car out of the garage where I put it up. He didn't happen to mention it to me—no need, you know—and when I rang up for it, of course it wasn't there. The chaps at the garage got the wind up because Mr. Hemming was a stranger to them: so—just as a precaution, you see. . . . You can't be too careful, can you?"

"No, sir."

"You're right. You see how it was; just to be on the safe side I thought it as well to let you people know."

"I see, sir. Bit unfortunate as it turned out."

"Very unfortunate, yes. But it's spilt milk now. And—if I may say so—I think you took it up very smartly."

"Thank you, sir. Very nice of you to take it that way, I'm sure, sir. It isn't every gentleman who'd do so. Then I suppose, sir, you're not making a charge?"

"Hardly. And, you understand, I appreciate your efforts. . . ." George handed round a big cigar-case and then turned to Peter.

"Come along, Hemming, I'll drop you in town. You can show me where it happened on the way in. By the way, Inspector, some of the other stations may be interested. Let Headquarters know that the matter's squared up."

The placated Inspector assured him that this would be seen to. Peter, feeling a little stunned, went out to the waiting taxi. Here George expanded, gave him a cigar, and spoke.

"Now we've got to think over making the claim."

"The insurance, you mean?"

"Yes, a good clear claim is half the battle."

"It may be a bit awkward. You see, I was actually stopped by a bobby a bit farther back."

"The deuce you were! Did you hit him?"

"No, dodged him."

"That's all right, then. Assault's nasty; but if there's no question of that we're on velvet. I'm good friends with the office, I put a lot of work their way, and I've never taken anything off them. It's a gift."

"Yes, but won't my little show make trouble?"

"No, not with the claim. Of course the Company might go for you . . ."

"How nice."

". . . but not for theft."

"No?"

"No, the Companies are fed to the teeth with that. They try to prosecute, and then the magistrates hold that it isn't stealing . . . only joy-riding. So their only chance is a civil action."

"They might do that, eh? Nice look out for me."

"That's all right. They won't take it to the courts. We'll just go to them with a plain tale and lay all our cards on the table. If they cut up rusty I'll stand by you. You see, with that fifteen hundred I ought to make anything up to two or three thou, so I can stand it. They'll be jolly glad to come to terms."

"Glad to think it. I was a bit nervous, I'll admit."

"No need to worry. There's another

thing. . . . I don't want to boast, but I shouldn't be where I am if I hadn't got it there." With a sort of solemnity he touched his head. "All the same, a chap's a fool if he can't give another man credit for brains."

Peter, a trifle puzzled, assented to these general principles. He wasn't prepared for the particular application that followed.

"I mean you, Hemming. I can admire pretty work, and I never saw a man get off the mark so clean. You could hardly call it a hint that I dropped at luncheon."

"Eh?" said Peter, and then he stopped. He was dead weary, he'd been nearly killed; and now this. He let the fool run on: he wanted to see how far he'd go.

"Never a flaw. Never a sign that you'd taken my tip. And you didn't rush the job—that's what I like. Just a run round and, I suppose, a bit of dinner. And you were heading for London when you smashed her. That's what I call art. I don't know how you managed to get just on the edge of that quarry. . . ."

"Oh, that was simply as it happened."

"Bit of luck, eh? Well, you deserved a bit of luck."

Peter opened the window and threw away his cigar. It was a good cigar—but still—— His voice was detached and casual.

"Now I've got it straight. You are congratulating me on the way I threw the car away?"

"Of course. What else?"

"I dare say you feel like making some acknowledgment of it?"

"Quite glad to. I'll say more. It'd be a pleasure to work with you. We ought to get together over a deal or two."

Peter tapped the window of the taxi.

"Getting out here?"

"I am." He closed the door and spoke through the open window. "I'll come round to your office in the morning and help you to make out the claim."

"That's good of you. Here's my card."

"And now I'll get a breath of fresh air. Good night."

The taxi went on into the growing dawn and Peter addressed himself to the tramp home—bitterly regretting the black eye he couldn't afford to inflict.

The claim had been settled; the "two or three thou" had been made; and Peter was feeling like a man after a badly needed bath. This time the car was no magnificent saloon—only a small two-seater—and borrowed at that. But again Daphne was by his side; and again Peter was hugely content. They had halted on the top of a high hill to enjoy a landscape of lovely curves under vivid sunlight.

Daphne came out of a happy muse. "Peter, you brute, you never wrote."

"Daphne, you brute . . ."

"How could I? I hadn't your address."

"And I never thought of noting yours."

"Aren't we a pair? But you could have looked me up."

"No, not before the time you named. It mightn't have been fair."

"Yes, that's how you would look at it. Thanks, my friend. And thank you for everything. I'm happy now, much happier than I deserve to be. I'm free . . . and I possess my soul. And I owe it all to you, Peter."

"Ah, no! You would have awakened, surely."

"Almost certainly too late. . . . Oh, Peter, how extraordinarily like our first meeting. I had taken the wrong road—I was all mixed up in things—and you conned me out."

"May I always be there to do that."

"You must wait, Peter. You must be patient."

Peter smiled under his brows. "Why must I be patient?"

It was a simple question but it had an extraordinary—and delightful—effect on Daphne. She blushed a lovely rose; and then she laughed—a laugh spontaneous and clear as the song of a thrush.

"Heavens!" she said, "I've proposed to the man. . . . I'm so glad." She gave him a sidelong smile. "And now, I suppose, he's going to say he can only be a brother to me?"

"Brother, lover, friend . . . what you will."

"Still, dear, you must give me time . . . and be very patient with me."

Peter took her hand and nodded gravely.

But love and hope can be immeasurably patient.

MR. BUFFUM FAILS AS A BUFFER

By HUGH DE SÉLINCOURT

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

A GOOD deal because her friend Marion was in New York till April, Niece Lucia was spending ten days of her Christmas holidays with Mr. Buffum. Geoffrey Goodman—commonly known as G.G.—had come down from London on a two days' visit. George Upland, Marion's brother, was coming for the week-end. Geoffrey Goodman belonged to Class B—she informed her uncle—with possibilities of promotion; for the Y.M.L.A. (or Young Men's Lucia Association) had been divided into Classes A, B and C, at Uncle's tentative suggestion, in order that he might not slip again into error so profound as he had slipped into with Bobbie—Bobbie Linthrop. Uncle had been scrutinised on suggestion that of course he understood that one day there would be somebody in a class by himself; and the steady silence of disapproval was at length broken by Niece remarking: "So much better not to regard them all as aspirants to my hand but simply as people I'm fond of." To which Mr. Buffum had hastily replied: "Certainly, dear. I'll endeavour to do so."

Mr. Buffum liked Geoffrey Goodman, a sensitive shy fellow with a blunt nose, a wide serious mouth and largish eyes given to twinkling. He was neat but not obtrusively neat; his thick hair, for instance, in rebellion against the way it was parted and asked to lie, looked well brushed but untidy: and Mr. Buffum quietly liked this very much.

At lunch on the day after G.G.'s arrival Niece Lucia announced that she had four letters to write before the post went, and Mr. Buffum felt a moment's pang of guilt that he did not instantly suggest that young Goodman should help him with his bonfire. He liked G.G. enough to feel that he *might* ask him: but not enough to be able to do so.

Mr. Buffum took delight in bonfires. They meant much to him. It was far more than the mere crude heaping of cut bracken, undergrowth, reeds, etc., into a toppling smouldering pile, which might or might not burn through, with the blunderer's assistance from paraffin or petrol. There was something ceremonial about his bonfires, and he took pains to stack the dry stuff, like tall bracken, in nice proportion to the wet stuff, each laid in carefully separated heaps after cutting.

The particular bonfire awaiting him called for special care. It would need a good foundation and very careful stacking, as the amount of wet reeds and wet grass was large. But there was also a good supply of dry bracken, and the whole lot could be burned by tea-time if the wet stuff were properly sprinkled over the flaming dry at the correct moment.

All this would be difficult to explain to a novice; who, too, might conceivably be bored by a bonfire, though that seemed hardly credible to Mr. Buffum. And anyhow, a bonfire was essentially a one-man job. No one wanted chatter or talk watching the smoke roll and billow away—or gazing in under the tilted pile at the effect of air on too heavily packed deadness; or listening to the roar and crackle of the fire in full blast, or enjoying the pungent smell of green reeds burning.

No: some delights were incommunicable; and the delight of a bonfire was incontrovertibly one of them: even if there had been *two* long-handled five-pronged forks.

He murmured to Niece, "I've a little job to do in the garden, dear," and evaporated directly after lunch, thankful that no question had been put as to the nature of his job.

He donned an ancient jacket, old gloves and heavy hobnailed boots, and hurried to

the woodshed for a trugfull of shavings and straw packings; half a newspaper bulged from his side pocket. He liked to get it well started; his pride was to let the whole conflagration depend upon one match and one only.

He found that old Ben, without saying anything, had put ready a pile of trimmings from the climbing roses, and several large rhododendron boughs, hacked to manageable size. Just like old Ben! Exactly what was wanted to give body and substance to the fire.

Mr. Buffum chose the place, tipped out his kindling from the trug, stacked the driest bracken on the kindling with his long-handled prong, and on the bracken placed with careful hands the likeliest bits of rhododendron.

Then he knelt down, struck a match and touched her off. He held his breath to watch the little flame become on a puff of wind a sizzling crackling roar, eating into the tall heap, which slowly lowered before his eyes. No time to waste. He drove his prong into the rose-trimmings and swayed the load on to the fire, which licked into its fodder. Reeds and wet stuff to keep it down. Golly! It 'ud burn anything! Three heavy prong-loads brought from heaps fifteen yards and more away, and he could wait a bit to watch the volumes of smoke billowing in quick rolling curves up and away.

Marvellous thing, fire! All from one match, too. He inserted his prong and lifted it across his knee, stooping, to let in air . . . watching in awe the busy flames at work, in musing awe the rolling smoke . . . till the wind eddied and brought the smoke thick and warm and pungent against his face. He moved round slowly, to become aware of young Goodman neither critical nor amused but gazing like an initiate at the rolling smoke.

Mr. Buffum went and stood by him, leaning on his long prong. No word was spoken. Time to feed her with a good load of dry bracken and more rose-trimmings; a rite which Mr. Buffum solemnly performed, returning to the admirably silent young man.

Then the young man spoke: and he spoke rightly, addressing no one, letting the words drift dreamily like smoke from his mouth. He said:

> " 'I've a friend over the sea.
> I like him but he loves me.'

Only I'm the friend . . . and she's here . . . and in the poem they were both men."

This was the sort of communication that Mr. Buffum most appreciated, as no immediate answer was required. A young man who quoted Robert Browning and could enter without the slightest jar into the true ruminant bonfire spirit seemed to Mr. Buffum quite amazingly eligible; but he rapped down the idea as an impertinence. What, after all, did he know about a young girl's heart? He let his gaze wander off with the rolling tall column of smoke, away and away. . . . A tongue of flame leaping through urged him to fetch a layer of green reeds and grass. He shook it lightly over: fetched another.

"Notice the smell of those reeds!" he brooded aloud and as easily went on ruminating aloud: "Something perhaps to care for somebody. Nobody can *marry* everybody."

These profound truths rolled off loose and vague into the air: not trite and senseless, as in the ordinary rat-tat smack-back habit of conversation, irritating and out of place like smoke in a room; eye-stinging, lung-choking.

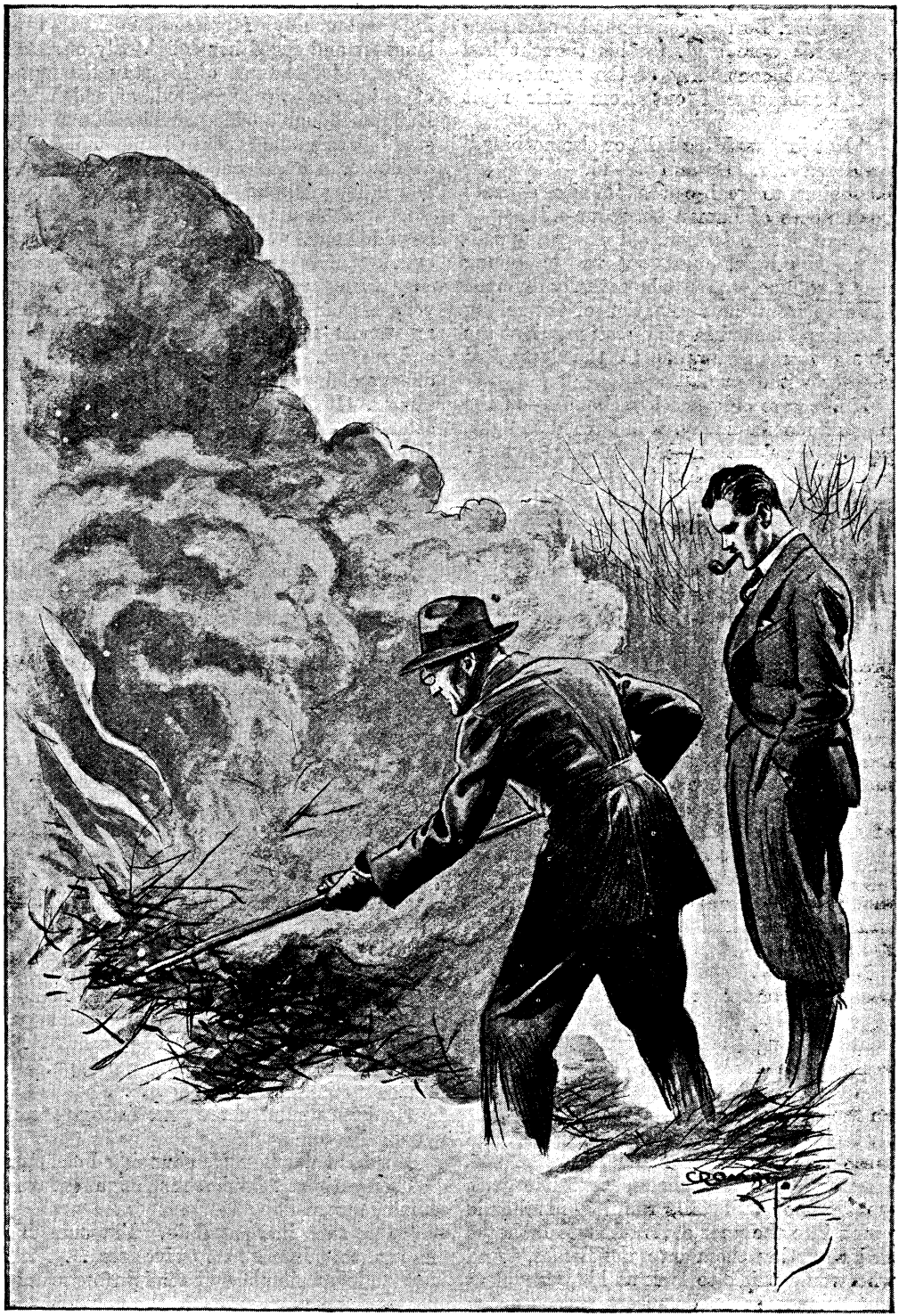
"I'm pretty certain she's in love with somebody else, as a matter of fact."

Mr. Buffum, gazing at the smoke, thought it wiser to let these words eddy and swirl completely away. The young man continued sadly:

"It was fairly easy going in the old days. You could at least offer 'em a home of their own—a change for the better usually from their parents' home: a bit more freedom, anyhow. But now . . . now . . . they live their own lives, earn their livings, do their jobs . . . what have you to offer 'em? Nothing. Nothing but your rotten self. It's awkward. And you've got to be so beastly explicit about your feelings."

Mr. Buffum stared into the smoke. His opinion that no difficulties existed for these free young people underwent revision. The difficulties had changed their character: that was all. He was amused to find that he, the old-fashioned, was offering support to modernity, as he murmured, more to the rolling smoke than to the young man beside him: "Aren't we—people—I mean—that is to say, men and women, trying to understand each other perhaps a little better, don't you think?"

Mr. Buffum stacked on the remaining heaps, four good prong loads—into which the fire ate hugely, forcing up volumes and rolling volumes of billowing cloud-like smoke. He watched fascinated. And through the smoke emerged the young man's words,



"Marvellous thing, fire! All from one match, too. He inserted his prong . . . watching in awe the busy flames at work."

"Yes: there may be something in that." Though Mr. Buffum could not be sure *when* the words were said, for his thought had caught the continuity of the smoke-cloud and words spread out from their right context.

"Not just wedding bells or else nothing," pondered Mr. Buffum aloud. "We are beginning to realise the infinite delicate possibilities of human intercourse."

There was no fashion, old or new, in sadness. His heart went out to the young man: so much so, that he actually diverted his gaze from the fascination of the rolling smoke and looked in his direction. But the young man, admirable to the last, had silently withdrawn.

If life were only one long bonfire—of the passing moments, say, well burned to light, nourishing, clean ash—no more eligible mate could be imagined than this most admirable young man, silent in approach, silent in withdrawal, and rightly communicative, claiming no fuss of answer.

Mr. Buffum busied himself with the last most fascinating task of a bonfire: the loosening of the packed tightness to give play to the flame. He shook out lumps pressed to an incredible flatness: a moment's pause and the fire took firmer hold so that he was obliged to retreat from its heat.

On these short winter afternoons the light faded early: and the glow of his fire shone more redly as it burnt itself out.

He came in to tea, his mind set for a party of agreeable melancholy, but he found his young friends uproariously gay: and remaining in the bonfire mood, he smiled to imagine that perhaps more rubbish than bracken and wet reeds had been consumed during the afternoon.

Niece led a ribald attack on his ridiculous passion for bonfires: he was merely indulging a little boy's longing to play with fire—pent-up naughtiness emerging after forty years and more repression. All rubbish that he thought great fire-worshipping thoughts on fire's metaphorical—metaphysical—meta . . . oh, he never met a meaning. What sense there was was malice, pure malice. Horrible. Mephistopheles, complete with cloven hoof and tail, running his horrid prong into the poor souls of those he hated and thrusting them into the flames. And who would think to look at his benevolent countenance as he demurely munched hot muffins (bagging more than his share at that) that beneath this kindly elderly normal surface lurked a perverted Sadist?

And the admirable young man, his brooding melancholy forgotten, rocked with laughter and egged her delightedly on.

Indeed for the rest of his stay the mood of gaiety happily persisted, of which Mr. Buffum, though a trifle bewildered, was very glad. His bewilderment did not afflict him at all, because he found the surprisingness of people he was fond of a constant source of pleasure. And that was fortunate, for his bewilderment was much increased on the evening after the young man's afternoon departure, by finding a very solemn and a very grateful Niece, who treated him with an almost alarmingly surprising deference and respect. It was in the air, vaguely in danger of becoming oppressive, all through dinner. It became embarrassingly vocal after dinner, when they were sitting peacefully in the study.

"What did you say to G.G., old man?" she began. "He quite changed."

"Who? Me?" Mr. Buffum hastily demurred. "Oh, nothing. Nothing at all."

"Oh!" she said. "He seemed to think you did. You see, it was like this. We were quite good pals. Keen on the same sort of books. He dances very well, too. Then all the fun went out of him: he became gloomy and dull, and when I asked him what was the matter, he said in a sepulchral voice at last, 'Oh, I've fallen in love with you.' Pretty feeble, you know, when you come to think of it; and not too frightfully flattering."

"Ah!" said Mr. Buffum, and waited.

"All that covered about a year since I've known him," Niece explained, and looked steadily at Uncle as though some pronouncement were expected from him. He moved uneasily in his chair.

"Any foolishness," he stammered. "I mean . . . under these circumstances any *silliness* . . . I feel myself so capable of any absurdity, of any arrant absurdity . . . you must forgive my being quite guiltily sympathetic with any man. . . ."

He dried up under the penetrating gaze of young Niece.

Her hard young voice enunciated clearly: "Then you don't think feeling might quicken intelligence."

"I'm sure it should do. I'm sure it's meant to. But . . . forgive me . . . it's not quite so simple and straightforward as some people suppose. Oh, I'm not differing from you . . . I know there is no love without understanding. I know it quite well. But for all that . . . I've felt I could lie

down and howl if I mightn't . . . mightn't hold a person's hand, say. Senseless, of course. Silly. Reasonless. But it is so. And when that dear young man . . ."

He stopped suddenly. Niece never took her eyes off him. He waved his hand, smiling as though to dispel the mesmeric influence of her young stare.

"Mustn't do it. Mustn't thus drag forth shy secrets." He laughed. "But I sometimes think that if a man has the courage to realise what a complete baby he is, there are hopes that he may become something else as well."

Tears came into her eyes. She kneeled by his side, holding his arms.

"You don't think me just a cheap sort of horrid little person, do you?"

"No," said Mr. Buffum. "I do not."

She sighed and sat back in her chair, stretching out her leg to push a log with her shoe.

"A poker is the last thing that shoe's daintiness is meant for," remarked Mr. Buffum.

"Oh! If you're careful," she said. "Tell me about G.G. You got *him* all right."

Mr. Buffum rubbed his hands together.

"Oh! It was the bonfire, really. That's what it was. The bonfire. Soothing, revealing things, bonfires. A nice young man. I like him. I'm glad he got cheered up."

"Do you think it's beastly of me to keep him dangling about, when I know I shall never marry him?"

"I don't consider you do keep him dangling about."

"It pretty well amounts to that, doesn't it?"

Mr. Buffum shook his head.

"Put it into words, old man."

"Well, I think you give him a great deal. I think you have a great sense of the other fellow."

"I like to think so. But I like him to be in love with me, you know. It's most awfully satisfactory. Do you think I oughtn't to?"

"I really don't know. I really couldn't say." He leaned back to laugh silently, and still leaning back he said to the ceiling: "You are a rogue, of course; you are a complete rogue. But I am too happy to have you talk to me like this to mind. As long as a person is aware of what they are doing . . . You're dear and warm-hearted: not cold and selfish and calculating. Any man, young or old, would be the better for knowing you."

"Rub it in, darling. Rub it in. I can't have too much of it. But what about me always shocking you?"

"Oh, you do that right enough. Perhaps I've been shocked to some purpose. I'm not quite blind."

And with odd distinctness the words of the young man G.G., allowed, when spoken, to roll off with the smoke into the large surrounding air, passed through his mind—"I'm pretty certain she's in love with somebody else"—and his mind corroborated the statement, though without the gloom of the statement's maker.

In the atmosphere of affection, which of us has not been aware of somehow knowing more than words tell us—as though some invisible prawn's whisker informed us what was happening in another's mind? In this way Mr. Buffum was aware of what Niece Lucia was beginning to tell him when she said:

"You think I'm utterly sure of myself. I'm not. I'm not a bit. Not where it most matters."

He waited. She kept staring at the fire.

"You see, I care for George. Oh, fearfully! About twenty times more than he cares for me. I'm frightened. There's no idiocy I wouldn't do. I'd crawl to him. Oh, Lord! I've no pride. No decency. Nothing. Not really. Though, of course, I behave as though I didn't care two pins about him. But if it goes on much longer I can't bear it. And if there is a thing on this earth I loathe it is an hysterical sort of hopeless woman."

On which the proud young girl lost control of herself and burst into tears. Mr. Buffum was intensely moved, not only in sheer sympathy at her sharp distress, but also by the trust which enabled her to be thus explicit—even terribly explicit—to himself. Yet through his mind scuttled the hard little incongruous thought: "Ah, the biter bit!"

Niece smiled and wiped her eyes, and went on: "You see, I nursed him two nights. I had to. It's too miserable being alone with a temperature, and I know a lot about nursing. And, anyhow, I wanted to. And it wasn't fair in a way. I had to be so dreadfully *sensible*!—all matter-of-fact—a nurse. And ever since he's been a perfect lamb, but he's treated me like a sort of lay sister. I dare say it's my fault, but when once you have been on practical sensible lines—no nonsense, you know—it's terribly difficult to change the step, you understand; to stop the rot."

Much to Mr. Buffum's chagrin, her dear little face suddenly puckered like a baby's about to cry, and before the tears came she added hastily, brokenly: "He's . . . he's kissed me like a brother ever since."

Mr. Buffum held the wrist of the hand that hid her face: said nothing: thought: "These young people . . . they do have their heartaches like us, then. The poor child's pitiful and absurd, too—oh, deliciously!" And he thought again, as on the previous day: "There is no fashion, old or new, in sadness. Perhaps she's a little more definite. But that's about all." She stroked his hand, a sign of recovery. He ventured to suggest, ever so gently, that possibly she might manœuvre a change in the nature of the caress.

She jumped as though stung by a bee.

"You don't suppose I'm going to throw myself at his head, do you? Sort of sink into his arms in a swoon? Oh, good Lord! No! But all this fearful friendliness does make things difficult . . . if you're out to play the game. And I am out to play the game. Which suddenly becoming the little feminine thing isn't part of it. Oh no! Man to man, play straight and Heaven help your feelings!"

It passed through Mr. Buffum's mind very distinctly that he could bear not to be merely her devoted Uncle. But then as a strange young man would he have the gumption to know her? He doubted it. He swerved from this line of thought to state most seriously: "I shouldn't mind if you did get engaged to be married."

Niece Lucia lifted a tear-stained face to eye him: and, in spite of her forlornness, laughter was obliged to come:

"Oh, wouldn't you! About time I settled down, eh? Got safely married and all that. I know."

"No, I wasn't meaning that," Mr. Buffum objected. "Or anything like it."

"What were you meaning, then?"

"I was speaking from my point of view; quite selfishly."

"Sorry, old man. I'm not there."

"I don't feel I should lose you, now. Get left out. Excluded."

He spoke dreamily, not noticing Lucia sit back to wave front paws angrily, not hearing her stuttered protest: "Oh, you thought that, did you!" Which he blandly interrupted, continuing dreamily: "A rare gift. A very rare and a very lovely gift. To be able to bring another into our happiness. To wish to share happiness."

Even rarer perhaps, owing to envy's poisonous pervasiveness, for one to be able to enjoy another's happiness. But Mr. Buffum did not mention that or think of it. Niece Lucia did: or rather sensed it, as one senses the pervading fragrance on first looking out of window on a warm spring morning, early.

Her front paws lowered and loosened: protest and challenge departed: she knitted her little hands together, fingers slowly interlaced, and throwing her small head back said in a strange, low, exalted voice, like a prayer or a thanksgiving: "Oh, dear God! There are good things in the world."

And then the funny spell had to be broken. Too much of it. Too *much* of it. She jumped up, stretched out her arms, snapped her fingers.

"A cigarette!" she cried out. "A cigarette! For goodness' sake!"

She lighted one and puffed luxuriously.

"Married. Me. Oh, never on your life! I'll be a nice little wiry old spinster. Wiry and wary. And worry myself weary with good works and knitting. And join the great league to discountenance spitting. And not utter a word that's not utterly fitting."

"Idiot!" smiled Mr. Buffum. "I was unaware you were a poet."

"'Many a flower is born to blush unseen,'" she quoted gaily; then wagged her finger at him to add:

> "'No girl should be too proper,
> For fear she come a cropper.'

But I must go and powder my awful nose. You have a villainous effect upon a young girl, Uncle. I must be looking like the broken doll on the rubbish-heap, so streaky and dishevelled."

And out of the room she whisked, leaving Mr. Buffum in a pensive mood and wondering with not a little interest how she would behave during George Upland's visit. His entry into her confidence would make the interest of this visit almost too poignant. But he did not regret his entry. Far from it. He regarded it as an honour gained, or rather perhaps as an honour bestowed upon him.

He stood up and kicked the log on the fire, scowling. "Sentimental! Pooh! Enough to move the heart of a brass monkey."

The 'phone bell rang in the hall. He hurried down. Niece Lucia appeared, by the passage, her whole bearing even at that distance displaying eagerness, excitement, anxiety—

" Yes, George Upland speaking——"

" You want Lucia ? " Mr. Buffum asked, and turning to her with, " It's George ! " was met with frantic gestures of refusal.

" Oh no, don't bother her," the voice methodically proceeded. " I'm so sorry : I can't get away to-morrow. Not Friday. I shall be down on Saturday afternoon. I know you'll forgive me. Someone I must see on Friday evening. Nuisance. Yes. But it can't be helped. Please don't think me casual. Good-bye."

Mr. Buffum slowly hung up the receiver, blaming himself for being so feeble in an emergency. He had just woefully listened : had not pressed the young man to be less vague : had not urged him to come : had not even tried to make it Saturday morning. He said to Niece : " George has a business appointment. He can't get away till Saturday afternoon."

" Did he *say* it was a business appointment ? " was instantly asked.

Mr. Buffum fumbled with his answer : " I . . . I gathered it was."

" Did he send any message to me ? "

" Well, really, of course. It was all a message to you."

" Oh ! I see."

" He seemed . . . he seemed very much upset," Mr. Buffum remarked, obliged rather to stretch a point.

Niece Lucia smiled, not very brightly. " That's all right, old man."

A sudden impulse forced from Mr. Buffum's lips the question : " Tell me. Does Marion know ? "

" Brother and sister ! " she said quite gaily. " We laugh over little brother's attractiveness. I'm supposed to be immune. It's a sort of stock joke. He won't believe he is attractive. Makes him quite angry. So we have to tease him about it. He adores Marion. We call him Don Juan. And then he swears he's scared to death of girls and women—with a few exceptions. And we rag him about the number of exceptions. Oh, he's a darling ! "

She took Mr. Buffum's arm and walked him into the drawing-room.

" I was afraid he wasn't coming at all," she said, to explain away her hurt, for his benefit, he knew ; and it was his turn to accept with : " Oh, I see."

But she pursued the matter. " Old man, you mustn't be troubled about me, dear."

He was getting used to her quick changes of mood : she spoke now gently, and quietly sure of herself. " You mustn't think of me as a forlorn little love-sick soul. Oh no ! Slopping over completely as I did just now has been an enormous relief. Made me see more clearly than ever how thrilling it is to care. . . ."

She drew her little body proudly up : " You need have no fears for me. I'm not ashamed to care—so much."

There was a quiver in her voice not of tears but of exaltation, to which Mr. Buffum responded.

No other little breakdown occurred : no listlessness : no sign of the love-sick maiden : indeed no reference at all was made to George or his coming until they were drinking coffee after lunch on Saturday, when Lucia said : " Sorry, old man, but a solitary walk is indicated. A bit restless. And any incipient hysteria must be nipped in the bud. Don't you think ! "

And off she resolutely set.

All men (even those in a staid avuncular or paternal position) undergo some difficulty in comprehending what a girl, dear to them, can possibly find attractive in another man. Mr. Buffum thought George Upland a pleasant fellow : but, well . . . all this feeling seemed a little excessive perhaps when directed to one who was after all quite an ordinary young man. And really, a very stupid young man if he were not aware of his amazing luck in being loved by a girl like Lucia.

To try and see him with her eyes would be interesting. And even if he could not quite manage that imaginative *tour de force*, he would be watching a poignant little comedy : not too poignant, he hoped, for his power of control.

He got up, on his way to meditate peacefully in the study, when Eliza opened the door and quietly announced :

" Mr. Upland."

And the young man himself strode into the room, rather taking Mr. Buffum's breath away by the unexpectedness of his arrival. He trusted that his welcome was adequate. He mentioned that Lucia, not expecting him till tea, had gone out for a walk alone. But George seemed restless and perturbed.

" Gone out for a walk alone ! " at length he repeated, with annoyance in his voice. " What's the sense of that ? That's like a girl. Which way's she gone ? "

" She didn't say, I'm afraid."

" There you are. Can't even leave a message simple as that. Girls are like that. Want to make you feel in the wrong. Why



"'Furious with you!' she laughed. 'But I'm not, you absurd person.



We had the most delightful evening together, didn't we, Old Man?'"

can't they be easy and sensible, same as a chap ? "

"Perhaps because they're not—chaps," Mr. Buffum threw out. "Only just girls."

It didn't sound really sympathetic, though he wanted to be sympathetic.

"You never *do* know *where* you are," George angrily said. Then, feeling the unfairness, no doubt, of working his anger off on Mr. Buffum, he added : "Anyhow, I'm awfully sorry—only it is riling, isn't it ? "

Mr. Buffum always knew that two sides existed to every question, but never before had he seen both sides simultaneously with such distinctness. It made any response too difficult for him. He smiled vaguely and murmured a non-committal "I suppose so." Then brightened to remember that though George Upland might be unsatisfactory as a lover, he was an indubitable expert with a Planet car, and there could be no harm in diverting attention from the difficult ground of human emotion to the safer mechanical ground of an internal combustion engine, as his own Planet was behaving in a way that was not intelligible to either Monnie or himself.

Accordingly he made the suggestion that they might perhaps have a look at the car, and the suggestion was eagerly accepted. They went out to the garage. Monnie, of course, appeared from nowhere, and voiced the cause of anxiety.

No hint, now, Mr. Buffum was amused to notice, of any wish to cut the knot, as in the more human difficulty, by getting cross and asking why the car was not a bicycle, as George a few minutes earlier had got cross and asked why Lucia could not be like a chap. Not a bit of it. All was keenness, as though the difficulty were a challenge to intelligence. "It's a question of the most delicate adjustment," George looked up from unscrewing a valve to declare with happy face, and went on :

"Motor cars as a whole : then the particular make of car : then " (and his voice became enthusiastic) " the individual car of that particular make. It's uncanny how each car has its own character. All of which would sound mere rubbish to an ass not sensitive to the delicacies of a car ! "

He spoke with genuine bitterness. It hurt him to see a good car not appreciated and mishandled : taken for granted as a mere means of getting about.

" And human beings are even better worth understanding than cars," thought Mr. Buffum, and became absorbed in brooding thought as to what would happen if the same alert awareness were brought to bear on the delicacies of human nature as was being brought to bear on his Planet, while he watched and listened with his ears and eyes.

Their interest quickened, time flew.

Lucia returned from her walk, and saw them gazing under the Planet. Not being a chap, she did not join them with a casual *Hullo !* and gaze too. She thought that she would rather not appear first hot and dirty, dishevelled and tweedy from her walk. They seemed quite happy. She went in to have a bath and change ; with a distinct little pang at not being noticed (though she did everything possible to escape notice) and a distinct gleam of delight at having George there and at the prospect of meeting him at tea—looking her very best.

She had hardly turned on the bath water when the job with the car was brought to a happy termination, and immediately George asked : "Wherever's Lucia ? " To which Mr. Buffum, hearing her steps in the house and water running, answered : "I think she's having a bath after her walk."

George hooted, and said furiously :

"Sick as mud, you'll see : because we didn't hang about doing nothing till she *did* come back."

"Oh no ! " Mr. Buffum feebly expostulated, disliking the possible touch of truth in the taunt.

Mr. Buffum left him to wash and change his boots. They met five minutes later in the drawing-room—alone again—to smoke a cigarette and wait. A quarter-past four. Half-past four. Little was said. Eliza tapped and entered and said :

"Tea's ready, sir."

"We'll give her a minute or so, don't you think ? " Mr. Buffum ventured to suggest.

"Oh, of course ! " George snapped back.

The minutes passed. Long awkward minutes for Mr. Buffum—one of them—two of them—three of them—four of them—— Another cigarette ? No. She'd surely be coming now. Five of them—six of them . . .

And she came. She came demurely delicious, gay, confident, bright-eyed, welcoming George with the ease of a sister, and there was no need at all for the men in their nice cloth suits to feel stuffy and masculine in contrast to her lightness and colour, nor for George, in particular, to feel that some feminine trick was being played upon him.

Why couldn't she have loafed in to tea in her walking clothes ? He'd said : "Look here, do marry me ! People'll be sure to

talk after your nursing me those two nights, so let's be engaged now. Shall we ?" She'd said, " Good gracious, no ! " and ever since, for countless months now, she'd been different. She'd been playing some game with him. He'd not be able to stand it much longer. What was the great idea ?

Had Mr. Buffum known of this proposal, he would have been more puzzled than ever : but it was a little bit that had been kept from him—not so much from guile or deceitfulness, as that Lucia had given up the effort to understand the fury such a proposal had roused in her ; fury which bewildered her to think of—let alone express in words.

But she was all smiles and ease and graciousness as she escorted them to tea—a proper country tea, sitting up to the table in the dining-room, with bread and butter cut in slices, not in curled shavings ; with scones and two huge cakes ; cups, too, that were cups.

George set to work happily on bread and butter which he spread with Marmite. Lucia poured out the tea. The party was so easy and laughing and agreeable that Mr. Buffum could hardly believe his memory, which reminded him of passionate undercurrents. Indeed, if the information had been received from any other quarter than the girl herself, he would not have believed it. He could have sworn, though, that she was aware of George's resentment at her absence. Be that as it may, her presence dispersed it as effortlessly as the sun disperses mist. He seemed quite obviously and quite happily reconciled to the fact that she was Lucia and not Lucius.

Mr. Buffum was inclined to smile indulgently at little difficulties which the dear girl had doubtless exaggerated. Leave them alone together, he thought with elderly complacence, and things will arrange themselves.

So he retired to his study to write letters after tea ; and could hardly settle to his thriller. So convinced was he that all would be well, his mind kept wandering to plans for their future.

His surprise was, therefore, great, on joining them a little before dinner, to find a quiet game of Euchre proceeding, a game which he knew Niece Lucia rather disliked.

" Playing Euchre ! " he was obliged to ejaculate.

" Yes. Stupid little game, isn't it ? " she brightly said.

" Well, you suggested it," George declared.

" Did I ? " she asked gently, looking at him with a smile.

He flushed and threw down the cards.

" You jolly well know you did."

Mr. Buffum was caught napping.

" There is nothing wrong ? " he asked.

" Wrong ! " echoed Niece Lucia, prettily astonished.

" Wrong ! " George echoed glumly. " Not more than usual. They can't be straight and simple. Why can't you say out you're furious with me for not coming last night and have done with it ! "

" Furious with you ! " she laughed. " But I'm not, you absurd person. We had the most delightful evening together, didn't we, Old Man ? "

Mr. Buffum felt like a man who could not swim asked to jump in at the deep end. In these subtleties he was out of his simple depth.

" I . . . er . . . well . . . yes," he faltered. He had certainly enjoyed having her confidence.

" My mistake, of course ! " growled George. " But if you can't feel something in the air . . ."

" I must say . . ." began Mr. Buffum, deeply sympathising with George, but caught Niece Lucia's eye and stopped. Then went hot all over to think how nearly he had let out : " Oh, kiss and be friends, you silly children ! "

He sat silent, tugged in opposite directions. He had strong fellow-feeling for a fellow-man : women *were* unaccountable beings. There was no getting away from it. Yet Niece's weeping confidence had established him in the very heart of the woman's camp, where he had never penetrated before. " As a buffer," he sadly thought, " I'm certainly not a success."

Niece's sole concern apparently—(Kindness ? To be mistress of the situation ? To push the poor fellow deeper into the wrong ?) —was to see that Uncle's guest no longer remained peeved. She got up, and stood beside him, ran light fingers through his thick hair, said : " I'm sorry, George dear. Really I am, if I've been annoying."

To which George answered, forced to smile : " I *can't* make you out ! "

She gave his head an impulsive little hug to her body and laughed : " Oh, it's too simple ! There's nothing to make out ! "

And ran out of the room to get ready for dinner.

Alone with Mr. Buffum, George seemed to

sink together into his chair, staring into the grate, which he at length addressed:

"Damn it! She's in love with that rotter . . ."

And Mr. Buffum, waiting alert for the name of the rotter which was not forthcoming, missed his chance of denying the soft impeachment: for George made an effort, pulled himself together, sat up and began to talk with intelligence and keenness upon the beauties of the Planet car, which were not mysterious to him.

At dinner again Niece played her part almost too perfectly, Mr. Buffum could not help thinking. She wore her prettiest frock, and behaved with such ease and gaiety that no one would believe a care or any unhappiness had ever crossed her life's horizon.

It was as though she had issued a little edict that there should be no crossness and was carrying her little edict into effect.

Mr. Buffum drifted happily along in the easy current until he was brought up with a bump against the fact, of which he was aware with a shock, that each was frightened of the feeling generated between them. The boy surmounted his fear in his way: the girl in hers. His presence removed danger for her, gave her power.

Later on in the evening Mr. Buffum knew this quite without need of proof. For when at a little before ten he got up and said he thought he'd turn in (with no definite plan now of leaving the young people together), there was no pretence at all about her, as she said: "I'm dead tired too. I shall go, if you don't mind." All the virtue had gone quite out of her. A little tired child kissed each man "good night" and left them. Left George too, at the top of resentment, hurt and bewildered and angry.

"There! You see!" he exploded.

But Mr. Buffum could not listen to him. He saw him to his room and left him without a word, except of ordinary courtesy.



"He hurried to the door, but stopped in the doorway, listening. He heard, 'Oh, all right then. The sooner I clear off the better.'"

At breakfast on Sunday Lucia was very quiet: passive, in fact; as though she were resigned to let things take any course they

liked. George waited for her to take the lead, and waited in vain. Mr. Buffum did his best to fill in the gap; but George was hurt at the change in her, and showed it.

"What shall we do this morning?" he asked.

"Anything you like," Lucia answered, so that Mr. Buffum held the sausage-laden fork suspended in the air on the way to his mouth to look at her: so completely had she seemed at that moment to have given her secret away.

But George took the words at their face value, felt rebuffed. He shrugged his shoulders expressively: and went on eating his breakfast in silence.

Mr. Buffum noticed a look almost of pleading on Lucia's face. He was scared that she might break down. She had overplayed it last night. She *had* overdone it. Now she was at the end of her tether. He began to talk volubly about the pleasures of a country life in the winter. The little comedy was getting a bit too poignant for him. Yet where could he pin any blame to the young man, except, of course, for existing at all?

The painful meal ended, Mr. Buffum went up to his study. He was putting a match to his fire when he heard angry voices rising from the hall. He hurried to the door, but stopped in the doorway, listening. He heard, "Oh, all right then. The sooner I clear off the better."

He heard a stifled "Don't go."

Stepped back hastily as George crashed upstairs, slammed the door of his room. Stood behind the half-closed door, literally trembling to know what he could say to stop the angry boy, and nothing came to him, nothing came to him.

The bedroom door was flung open; George clattered down the stairs with his packed bag, the front door slammed.

Still, Mr. Buffum stood in the doorway. There would be time to stop him before the car was started. Still nothing came to him. Still he stood like a man paralysed, till the noise of an angry departure—a furiously revved engine—reached his ears.

Then he walked back into his room, leaving the door half open, and sat down, staring into the fire.

In a little while Niece came upstairs, slowly along the passage, slowly pushing open the door. She came in as though to walk required a difficult effort.

"He's gone!" she said.

Then she turned and hid her face in the cushions of the couch and cried as though her heart was breaking.

Mr. Buffum, on his knees beside her, a hand on her shaking shoulder, said: "You mustn't cry, dear. You mustn't cry." After what seemed endless moments, she left off crying.

"It's all right," she said, cleaning up the traces of the storm. "I've got mine. I dare say he's quite right. I dare say I do want people in my power. I dunno. Anyhow, he's finished with it. Gone clean away. Just watched him go." (She gave a little laugh and repeated.) "Just watched him go. Wouldn't raise a finger to keep him. Couldn't. Couldn't."

She suddenly sat on the floor, leaning against Mr. Buffum's knees, unable to face him or anyone. He stroked her head, feeling horribly to blame. Surely he could have been more helpful. At any rate, no one could have been less helpful. At length he said: "Dear, I'm sure he cares far more than you realise."

"Oh no, no, no," came Lucia's whisper. "This is the end."

"I'm sure it's not!" said Mr. Buffum firmly.

"He doesn't want to care. He's afraid to care. I've done with him."

But Mr. Buffum's opinion did not change.

The concluding "Mr. Buffum" story will appear in our next issue.

THE LITTLE MORE.

THE rose is never half so fair
As when it wreathes beloved hair,
Nor fully musical the string
Until a voice be following.

The sea, though full, is loneliness
Until the moon come forth to bless;
And joy, however much before,
Holding your image, grows to more.

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THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

THIN ICE

By Herbert Hamelin

"WE will go skating this afternoon," announced Lavender.

I glanced at the rain-soaked garden.

"Poor thing," I murmured. "A little bromide——"

"Funny ass, aren't you?" she snorted. "Never heard of Skating Clubs?"

I had, but not for such as I. There was a time, when I was a boy—Lavender calls it The Ice Age—when I was a near-skater. A few more winters and I should doubtlessly have got my crossed skates emblazoned on my blazer instead of the back of my neck. But it was not to be. At least, apparently, it was. Lavender informed me that we had joined a skating club.

I arrived at the arena armed with skates, cushions, arnica, iodine, bandages and cotton-wool. We found a vast expanse of ice dotted about with figures in Perpendicular, Gothic, Tower of Pisa, Heavyweight-Boxer and Early English attitudes. A band was playing vociferously. I did not fully appreciate the guile of this attention on the part of the management. I did later!

When Lavender emerged from the dressing-room we wobbled on the ice to the strains of a dreamy valse.

"Er—I think we had better sit this out," I suggested as I leaned negligently against the barrier.

A kindly person, in the uniform of a Russian Dvornik, assisted us to our feet and left us draped over the barrier.

Lavender seemed hurt about it. I certainly was, and blamed the cloak-room attendant for impounding my cushions. Lavender thought we should do better alone, so I staggered off on my own.

After some hours I completed the circuit and found her where I had left her.

"Oh, here you are," she smiled. "How goes it?"

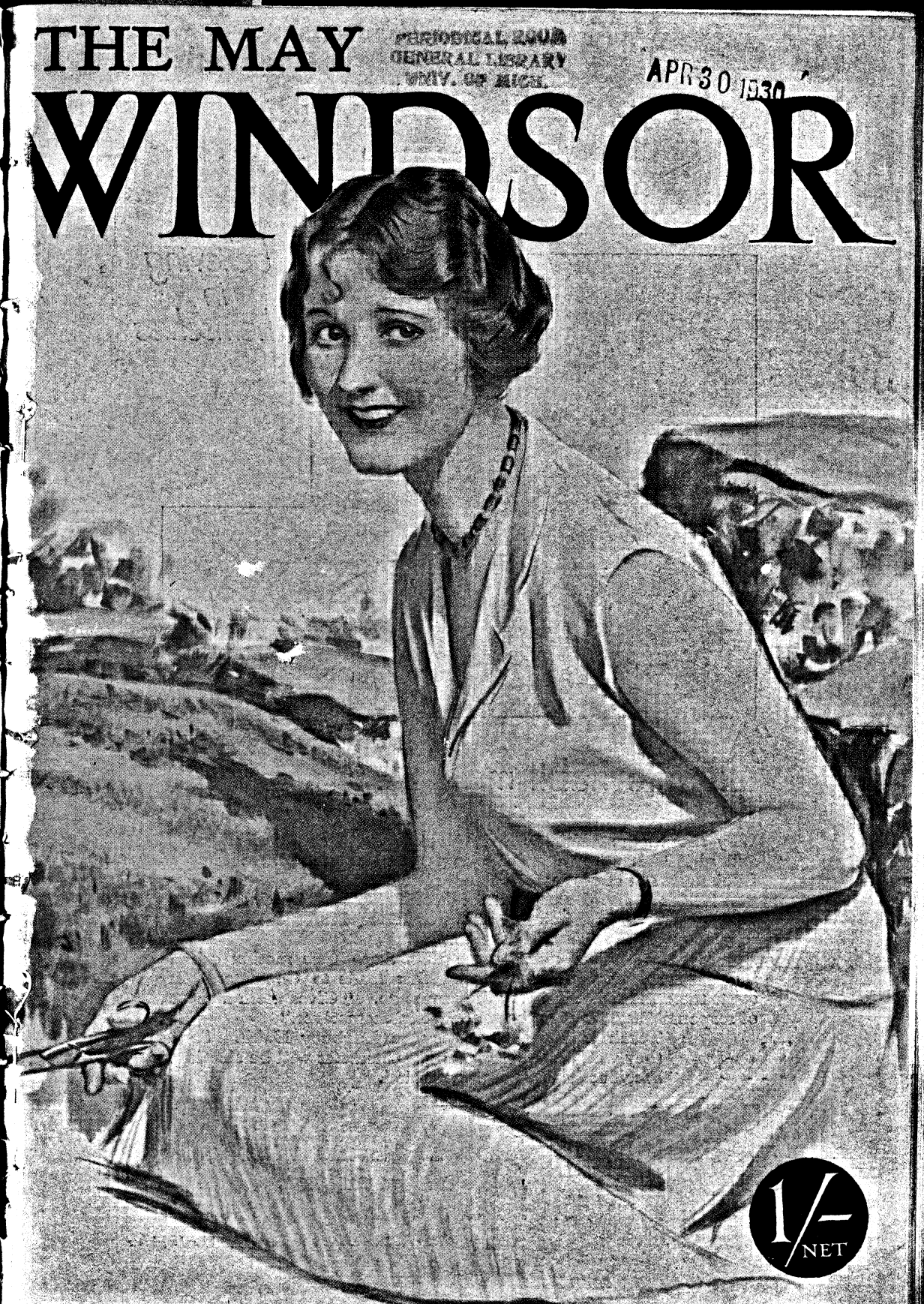
"Splendid!" I panted, collapsing at her feet. "Er—you don't mind if I take a seat, do you? I had no idea skating was such a sociable pastime. I've been running into all sorts of people."

"Anyone you knew?" she asked.

"Oh, I bumped into your brother," I replied.

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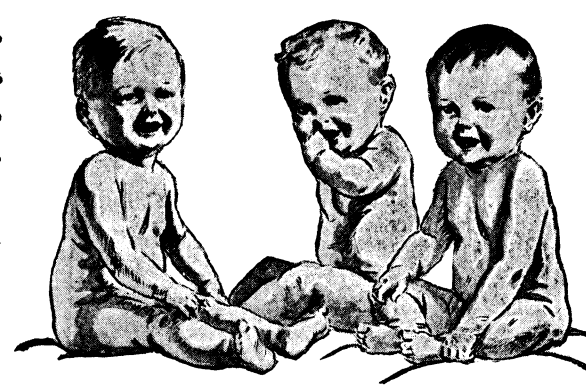
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OUR GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS: CLIFTON.



"'Miss Araby Dew,' began the manager, 'the Big World's Baby Girl. . . .'"
(*See page* 676.)



THIRD PARTY RISKS

By MARGERY SHARP

ILLUSTRATED BY W. BRYCE HAMILTON

WHEN the fumes from the magnesium flash had cleared away, Jimmy removed his horn-rims and regarded the visitor with surprise: for the clients of the Hope and Foresight Insurance Company were not usually heralded by thunder, lightning, and eleven pressmen.

This client, however, was different.

She wore, in the first place, a sumptuous ermine coat dyed blue to match her eyes and a tiny felt hat that could be described only as a pudding-basin of genius. As for the face between the soft blue collar and the inspired blue brim—it was at once so familiar and so incredible that Jimmy couldn't believe his eyes. With an effort he replaced his glasses and pulled himself to his feet.

"I—I know you," he observed idiotically.

A murmur of discreet amusement ruffled the rows of pressmen. Of course he knew her—wasn't she the World's Most Popular Film Star, with a quarter of a million votes to spare over every other actress in Hollywood or out of it? Nevertheless, as a sop to the conventions, a small and swarthy gentleman stepped from the ranks and performed the introductions.

"Miss Araby Dew," he said simply, "the Big World's Baby Girl."

Jimmy bowed, slightly breathless.

"Mr. Clay, personal photographer."

The young man responsible for the magnesium flash nodded condescendingly and went on fiddling with his camera.

"Mr. Murphy, publicity agent."

Mr. Murphy removed his cigar and smiled.

"The Press."

The Press grinned a bit.

"My name's Lewison. Miss Dew's manager." He threw out his chest a little as he said it, like Napoleon in the boarding-house engravings, and Jimmy very nearly saluted in return. Instead he bowed again and offered the lady a chair, wondering whether he ought to sub-title himself before proceeding to business. Mr. Lewison, however, saved him the trouble:

"I understand you are Sir Charles's private secretary?"

Jimmy nodded, though without conviction, for the proud title was merely an acknowledgment that his father had founded the Company, and bore no relation to his official functions. The great Hope and Foresight Insurance Company could (and indeed did) carry on quite happily without any effort on Jimmy's part, and he never lost the feeling that he was being tipped rather than paid at the end of the month.

"Then we would like to see Sir Charles."

"Have you an appointment?" asked Jimmy, in his best secretarial manner.

Mr. Lewison raised his eyebrows.

"Miss Dew's presence," he explained kindly, "*constitutes* an appointment."

On the strength of her exquisite ankles alone Jimmy agreed with him, but his uncle, the general manager, was quite likely to take an opposite view. Sir Charles hated being disturbed immediately after lunch. . . . At that moment, however, Araby turned her head (she always stood in profile for the first two or three shots, to let it sink in) and favoured him with a long, languorous close-up of her wonderful eyes. Zigzagging slightly, Jimmy surged into his uncle's room without bothering to knock.

"Araby to see you, sir," he carolled.

Sir Charles gave him one look and reached for the bell.

"This is a new departure, James," he observed grimly but without surprise. "I knew you were slack, clumsy, and mentally deficient, but I was not aware you drank."

"I'm not, sir. I mean I don't. But Miss Dew's here to see you, sir, and—and another general manager."

"Has she an appointment?" Sir Charles's hand was still edging towards the bell, so Jimmy stepped quietly up and removed it.

"Miss Dew's presence," he explained kindly, "*constitutes* an appointment."

At this not inopportune moment a peculiar change came over the manager's face. The purple hue of apoplexy faded patchily from his indignant features, giving place to that sickly green colour commonly associated with hopeless love; and his eyes, which a second earlier had been literally popping with fury, were now glazed over like those of a dying cod. The explanation was not far to seek. Miss Dew, tired of waiting outside, had entered the office at the head of her cortège, and Jimmy gratefully surrendered the situation into Mr. Lewison's more experienced hands.

"Miss Araby Dew," began the manager, "the Big World's Baby Girl. . . ."

While the introductions were being repeated, Jimmy leant beatifically against the safe recovering his breath and taking in the astonishing group on the other side of his uncle's desk. In the centre sat Miss Dew, poised lightly as a blue butterfly in the enormous chair, her minute grey slippers swinging six inches from the floor: on her right Mr. Clay continued to fiddle with his camera, on her left sat Mr. Murphy in an attitude copied from Rodin's "Thinker": while behind them the pressmen lounged like a badly-trained chorus. The space between the two parties was occupied by Mr. Lewison.

When all was quiet again Miss Dew opened her perfect lips and let a few words drop like rose petals on the blue ermine.

"I wish to insure myself," she murmured, "against marriage."

Sir Charles gaped. Mental agility had never been his strongest point.

"Yes." Mr. Lewison took the floor again with obvious impatience. "The step is one which has been contemplated for some time. We believe that a very large part of Miss Dew's popularity is due to the fact that she has never so much as become engaged. The single-minded devotion, sir, with which Miss Dew consecrates herself to her work has made a great impression on the American public. In the second place, she is under engagements both to the Araby Dew Film Corporation and to the management of the London theatre where she is at present starring not to get married within the next year. And finally, Miss Dew herself prefers to remain single. In brief, she wishes to insure herself against marriage to the sum of one hundred thousand pounds."

When he had finished there was a moment's reverent silence: then all the reporters flicked over the leaves of their notebooks and looked up expectantly for more.

"The risk," said Sir Charles gallantly, "is very great."

"Enormous," agreed Mr. Lewison briskly. "Why, last time we visited the West she was abducted twice between Chicago and New York alone."

"Elopements," corroborated Mr. Murphy in a deep bass voice. "Remember that business in St. Louis, Fred?"

Sir Charles regarded them in surprise, for clients were not usually so anxious to magnify their risks. The reporters, however, continued to scribble busily.

"But if Miss Dew herself does not wish to marry," pointed out Jimmy from his observation-post by the safe, "surely there is little danger——"

At that Miss Dew, who had apparently been to sleep ever since she last spoke, opened her blue eyes and smiled at him.

"You see," she said gently, "I'm so temperamental."

"Exactly. You may believe me or not," amplified Mr. Lewison, "but last May Mr. Murphy here and myself were only just in time to stop her eloping with a little Swedish sculptor living in the Bronx."

"In the spring the maiden's fancy——" added Mr. Murphy.

"And then," continued Mr. Lewison, lowering his voice reverently, "there is Love. The greatest of all God's gifts, Sir Charles, to poor, groping, suffering humanity. And if Love came to our little girl here would we, or would the great American public, ask her to spurn it aside for the sake of a few contracts? Sir Charles, as men of honour we could not. It would be repugnant to our feelings as citizens of the two greatest Empires the world has ever seen. But as men of business it is only reasonable that we should attempt to safeguard ourselves against loss. The risk, as you so justly remark, is very great: but so is the premium we are prepared to pay."

Apparently from the empty air Mr. Lewison produced two slips of paper and laid them on the General Manager's desk. The first was a brief but entirely watertight document to the effect that in the event of Miss Dew's marriage, in any circumstances whatsoever, during the next twelve months, she would be entitled to the sum of one hundred thousand pounds from the Hope and Foresight Insurance Company: the second was the Araby Dew Film Corporation's cheque for half the same amount.

"But this," said Sir Charles, staring glassily at the figures, "is most unusual."

"Unusual!" repeated Mr. Lewison warmly. "I should say it is! I guess this is the first time anyone's heard of insurance against matrimony."

"I beg your pardon," interposed one of the reporters suddenly, "but that's a point we should like to be quite clear on. This *is* the first time——?"

Sir Charles nodded absently. "So far as I know. I should, of course, have to consult my Board, Mr.—er—Lewison, and no doubt . . ." But his voice died away as Mr. Murphy's compelling features were slowly advanced to within a hand's-breadth of his own.

"Now you listen to me," exhorted Mr. Murphy, leaning heavily on the desk. "We haven't time to play marbles while your Board has a tea-party. Miss Dew opens here to-morrow night, and this policy's got to be in the papers to-morrow morning. It's the biggest advertisement your firm's ever likely to have for the rest of its days, and if you take that premium along to Wall Street or whatever it is you have over here, why, you'll cover all risks inside a week."

"I should certainly sign if I were you," added Mr. Lewison gently, as his colleague paused for breath.

"And furthermore," concluded Mr. Murphy, "I'm not going to leave this office till you do."

Still with the slightly glazed stare of the cod Sir Charles picked up his pen, opened his mouth, shut it again, and signed. More Napoleonic than ever, Mr. Lewison cleared a way for the Big World's Baby Girl. From his breast pocket Mr. Murphy extracted a small gold fountain-pen, mounted in turquoise and specially balanced for Araby's use. The reporters pressed round as though to witness a second peace treaty: and in a sudden blinding flash of magnesium the agreement was completed.

THE success of Mr. Lewison's insurance policy was instantaneous and complete. As might have been anticipated, the addition of a hundred thousand dowry to Araby's already overwhelming charms served rather to encourage than to depress her suitors, and the innumerable Italian counts, French athletes and American millionaires who had followed her to London at once took heart and went out to order flowers. The effect of Araby's presence on florists was always startling, and for days not an orchid was to be found in all Mayfair. Many of the French and Italian aspirants unfortunately

left without paying their bills, but the trade as a whole did not suffer, on account of the Americans.

For a fortnight the joyous symphony continued unchecked. Disheartened suitors attempted suicide in the foyer after each performance, and subsequently contributed to the evening papers. The stage door was guarded by a pair of self-dedicated cowboys from the Wild West, and HOUSE FULL boards had to be fixed permanently outside the theatre. An enterprising daily organised a competition in which optimistic readers provided Miss Dew with ten possible husbands (in order of merit and exclusive of the Prince of Wales). At the end of the fortnight, naturally enough, Miss Dew disappeared.

The news came through to the Hope and Foresight just as the first posters appeared, so that Jimmy heard it from a newsboy about half a minute after Sir Charles had hung up the receiver. For the second time in his life he invaded the inner room without knocking.

"I know," said Sir Charles.

"How, sir? Over the 'phone? What are they doing about it?"

"Everything. Police, Press—no expense spared."

"I do hope," said Jimmy anxiously, "that she isn't uncomfortable."

Sir Charles regarded his nephew with undisguised dislike. "If we have to pay out a hundred thousand pounds within the next month," he said loudly, "the shutters will go up and there's an end of it."

"Even with fifty thousand in hand, sir?" suggested Jimmy helpfully.

The General Manager laughed unpleasantly. "In hand" was good. Miss Dew's fifty thousand had been "in hand" exactly twenty-four hours, and no one in the Hope and Foresight was ever likely to see it again. That was what came of taking the advice of these Yankee speculators. . . .

"I do *hope* she isn't frightened," persisted Jimmy, too worried to notice even his uncle's unnatural and alarming self-control.

"You do realise, I trust," observed Sir Charles suddenly, "that in about a week's time we shall both be on the dole?"

"Oh, you'll easily be able to get a job, sir," said Jimmy absently, "and I'll keep chickens. I've always wanted to. But I do hope——"

With surprisingly good aim Sir Charles flung the telephone book through the centre panel of the glass door. "If you had anything in you but a damned impertinent tongue you'd be out scouring the country for the little devil instead of standing there insulting your——"

"Exactly what I was going to suggest myself," agreed Jimmy. "Someone obviously ought to be scouring the country on our behalf, so perhaps I'd better go and do it. I shall need some expenses, Uncle Charles. Two or three hundred."

"Rubbish! You can have ten pounds and indent for more as you want it. I don't think you realise, James, that your assistance will be regarded more as a gesture than anything else. The police and Press——"

"On the other hand," pointed out Jimmy, "we're the only people who have any real interest in getting her back. A mere gesture won't carry much weight with the Board when they ask what steps you've taken. Better make it three hundred, Uncle Charles."

With a new and wonderfully agreeable sense of mastery he watched his chief go to the safe and take out a bundle of notes. What was Mr. Lewison's phrase? "Love, God's greatest gift to poor, groping, suffering humanity."

"That's the stuff," thought Jimmy Macfarlane.

IN the taxi that carried him to Mr. Lewison's hotel Jimmy astonished the driver by singing loudly as he read the last editions. For the first time in his life he had three hundred pounds and a free hand, and the combination went to his head. The three hundred pounds he proposed squandering as rapidly as possible on the rescue of a lady who wouldn't even remember his name, and no mediæval knight could have had a more romantic or disinterested exploit before him. The affairs of the Hope and Foresight touched Jimmy not at all: but if Araby were uncomfortable . . . With an effort he fastened his attention on the paper in front of him, endeavouring to extract the pertinent facts from a welter of journalese. They were surprisingly few: Miss Dew had left the theatre the previous evening in her usual Rolls-Royce, accompanied by a member of her suite; fifteen minutes later the car arrived empty at her hotel, the chauffeur having neither seen nor heard anything unusual *en route*. The rest consisted of a list of beauty competitions won by Miss Dew, together with opinions as to her precise type from all the leading American artists. Even the most practised sleuth, Jimmy felt, might have complained a little.

A curious semi-religious atmosphere brooded over Mr. Lewison's magnificent apartment, due partly to the drawn blinds and partly to the masses of flowers that filled every receptacle. In the absence of Miss Dew, it seemed, admirers sent their offerings to Mr. Lewison instead, a delicate attention which the bereaved manager did not appear to appreciate. He lay stretched easily on the sofa with his feet in a box of Madonna lilies, while Mr. Murphy, similarly embowered, read him extracts from the papers.

"'Morning, Mr. Macfarlane," said Mr. Lewison, "you find us in a very sad state. I guess Rachel mourning for her children couldn't have suffered much more than I'm suffering now. But I've never seen a better Press."

"Take a seat, Mr. Macfarlane," seconded Mr. Murphy, "and listen to what Donoghue says in the *Morning Mail*. 'The sensational disappearance of Miss Araby Dew, better known as the Big World's Baby Girl, has——'"

"Do you mean to say," interrupted Jimmy rudely, "that you're just sitting here reading bits out of the paper while Araby may be—may be——" But his words failed before the awful imagination of what might be happening to Araby.

A shade of reproach passed over Mr. Murphy's amiable features.

"See here, young man, don't you go teaching us how to look after our little girl. We may seem to be doing nothing now, but we did a deuce of a lot last night. Why, there isn't a paper in the country that hasn't got headlines."

"That's about all they have got, then," snapped Jimmy. "Who was with her in the car?"

"Cowboy McCoy. And furthermore, young man, I won't have you getting interviews out of our men. All publicity work is done through me and Mr. Lewison here."

"I believe you know where she is," said Jimmy boldly, watching for traces of emotion.

"We do not. Nor yet where she was last night, nor yet where your grandfather's buried."

"Then what the hell are you *doing* about it?" shouted the knight-errant. "Aren't you even *trying* to find her? Suppose she's in danger?"

Mr. Lewison sat up and looked at him with a flicker of interest.

"Say, have you ever thought of going on the screen yourself?" he demanded. "The way you registered contempt just then was great. Did you notice the way his jaw worked, Murphy?"

Mr. Murphy obligingly got up from his chair in order to view their guest's jaw from the side, but before he had time to make any observation, the door was flung violently open and a fourth character appeared on the scene.

For a moment the new-comer stood motionless, except for a slight swaying movement, regarding the party from the threshold of the room. He presented the general appearance of one who has spent the morning after sleeping in his clothes.

"McCoy!"

Mr. Lewison dropped back on the sofa and stared as though he had seen a ghost.

"Good Lord," said Jimmy, in a surprisingly loud voice, "I thought you'd disappeared!"

An enormous grin split Mr. McCoy's not unkindly face.

"Oh, you did, did you?" he replied genially, wagging a gigantic forefinger in what he no doubt intended to be Jimmy's direction. "Well, I haven't. Because if I'd disappeared I couldn't be here now, could I? And I *am*."

That seemed reasonable enough, but Mr. Lewison was in no mood for bandying logic.

"What the hell are you doing here?" he demanded. "Don't you know you're to keep under cover till further notice?"

"According to the *old* plan," agreed Mr. McCoy amiably, "but this isn't the old plan. It's quite new." He winked broadly at Jimmy as though to a fellow-conspirator, and sat down all among the lilies. "What *nice* flowers you've got here," he added kindly.

Mr. Lewison regarded his employee in silence for a moment and decided to change his tactics.

"Well, now you are here," said he, "you might as well tell us where you've left Miss Dew."

Once more the enormous forefinger came into play.

"Aha!" teased Mr. McCoy, "isn't that just what you boys would like to know?"

"Then she's not in our place?"

"Oh dear, no. Not in your *old* place. In my *new* place," replied Mr. McCoy, apparently much taken with the play on words. "I've come for the Ransom."

"You mean to say you've kidnapped her?" asked Mr. Lewison severely.

The self-dedicated cowboy nodded.

"You've about hit it, sonny. Setting

up for myself, I am, after a very thorough training."

Now Jimmy, ever since his first incautious exclamation, had been standing inconspicuously in the shadow of the window curtains hoping they would forget he was there ; and so it was that his eye fell on a taxi waiting patiently a little way from the main entrance of the hotel. It was old, and extremely dusty. It looked like a taxi that had come a long way in a hurry.

In the other half of the room the cowboy was being invited to partake of a friendly whisky-and-soda. He would probably take several. As unobtrusively as possible Jimmy slipped out of the door and dashed downstairs.

THE driver was unexpectedly hard to awaken, but Jimmy succeeded in time.

" Here, you," he panted, shaking him by the shoulder, " where've you come from ? "

" Brixton," replied the driver, apparently in his sleep, " and I ain't been paid yet."

" What was your fare like ? Big fellow ? "

The man nodded.

" That's him. Big—and tight."

" Did you pick him up in the street, or at a house ? "

" He was just running down the steps as I come by. Anything else, Sherlock ? "

" No, that's all," said Jimmy, getting into the cab, " and I'll give you five pounds to get back to that house in a quarter of an hour. . . ." He pushed a note into the man's hand and slammed the door.

The driver examined his booty carefully before buttoning it up in an inside pocket. It looked all right.

" Ah, well," he thought philosophically, " maybe *he*'s tight too."

WHATEVER Mr. Lewison's old place was like it could not have been much less prepossessing than Mr. McCoy's new place. No. 30, Exhibition Street, was a tall, grimy brick house with different curtains at each window and a general air of shabby vice. Jimmy regarded it with horror : it would be almost impossible for Araby not to be frightened in that beastly place.

When he had knocked for the third time, the door was opened violently and an elderly gentleman in a dressing-gown appeared in the aperture. He seemed to be labouring under some strong emotion.

" Why the hell can't you remember your key for once in your miserable life ? " he began at once. " D'you think I've got nothing better to do than hang about the stairs all day to let in a parcel of half-witted spongers who haven't the gumption to break a window ? What d'you think I'm *for* ? "

" But I don't live here," pointed out Jimmy politely, " so I haven't a key. I'm very sorry to have troubled you, sir, but I want Mr. McCoy."

The old man grinned in a singularly unpleasant manner.

" Then I should say you'd better go away again. I believe Mr. McCoy has company. Singularly charming company, if one may judge——"

With considerable difficulty Jimmy refrained from hitting the brute, and asked which was Mr. McCoy's room.

" Last one on the top floor. But remember——"

Without waiting for more the knight-errant dived for the stairs and shot rapidly out of sight. The old man listened to his progress for a few moments, but without much interest : far odder things than that happened at No. 30. Presently an abrupt crashing noise floated down to his aged ears : it sounded almost as though someone were breaking in a door. That might mean a row with the landlady. The old man gathered up his dressing-gown and went prudently back to bed.

Mr. McCoy's room was small, dark and very dirty, so that at first Jimmy was hardly able to distinguish the washstand from the dingy wall : but soon his eyes grew accustomed to the general gloom, and he had no difficulty in taking in its contents ; the most important of which was Miss Araby Dew.

She lay, still wrapped in her blue coat, just as she had cried herself to sleep on the lumpy bed ; and the pathos of her rumpled golden head and pale cheeks was such that Jimmy's heart almost burst with tenderness. He moved a pace or two nearer, wondering why she had not been wakened by the crashing door : and then he saw that she was not really asleep but only shamming, because she was so frightened.

" It's all right, darling," whispered Jimmy anxiously, " don't be afraid. I've come to take you back."

At that Miss Dew sat up in her tumbled coat and stared at him out of her blue eyes. Jimmy repeated it.

" But I don't want to be taken back ! " wailed Araby suddenly, surprisingly. " I don't *want* to ! "

Jimmy stared at her in astonishment.



"'It's all right, darling,' whispered Jimmy anxiously, 'don't be afraid. I've come to take you back.'"

"But—but all your contracts," he began, "and Mr. Lewison—and the great American public——"

"I wish they were all deâd," sobbed Araby.

Now Jimmy was not what one might call an experienced comforter, but his instincts were sound. He sat down on the edge of the bed and began patting the small of her back in a very soothing manner. The treatment answered admirably: she soon began to cry very comfortably into his shoulder, and seemed much calmer. . . .

Patting becomes a soulless sort of business after a time.

Presently Miss Dew lifted her tear-stained face, and Jimmy was surprised to find her looking almost plain. It was so adorably intimate of her that he had to accelerate the pats in order to control himself.

"Oh dear," she murmured damply, "I'm so *tired* of being a star!"

"Are you really, bless you, you darling!" said Jimmy longingly.

"I'm so *tired* of always having to be kidnapped and abducted and never smiling more than half an inch," she added apologetically, as one who knew she was being a little unreasonable. "Do you know I haven't chosen one of my own hats for more than three years?"

"I suppose," suggested Jimmy tentatively, "you've never thought of keeping chickens?"

Miss Dew's upward glance expressed complete willingness to begin.

"The principle of the thing," began Jimmy happily, "is this . . ."

"—with a capital of about three hundred pounds," proceeded Jimmy carelessly. . . .

In the end they decided on White Leghorns.

MESSRS. LEWISON and Murphy have a new star now, a charming little Viennese with a Slav temperament. Their last disappeared suddenly while on a visit to London, nor was all the publicity department capable of finding her again. Perhaps they didn't try very hard, for the great American public is fickle, and likes new blood. The Hope and Foresight Insurance Company still hangs on, but with a new private secretary in the General Manager's office. Jimmy Macfarlane left some time ago to get married, and though they never saw the bride, his colleagues clubbed together and presented him with a very handsome knife-box. I forget the result of the Araby Dew lawsuit.

EPITAPH ON AN OLD BACHELOR.

I THOUGHT to see, ere I lay low,
My merry childerkin a-row,
But died without a bed-fellów.

For, lacking pence, I feared to woo,
And let another wed with Sue
Who smiled on me a summer through.

I lost, likewise, both Jess and Kate
My neighbours by the Smithy gate,
For neither was content to wait.

So half for pelf and half for pride
Alone I dwelt until I died
And went to church without a bride,

A grizzled groom unloved and old.
And now Remorse, the cruel scold,
Is my bed-fellow in the mould.

WILFRID THORLEY.

THE MAN IN THE DICKY

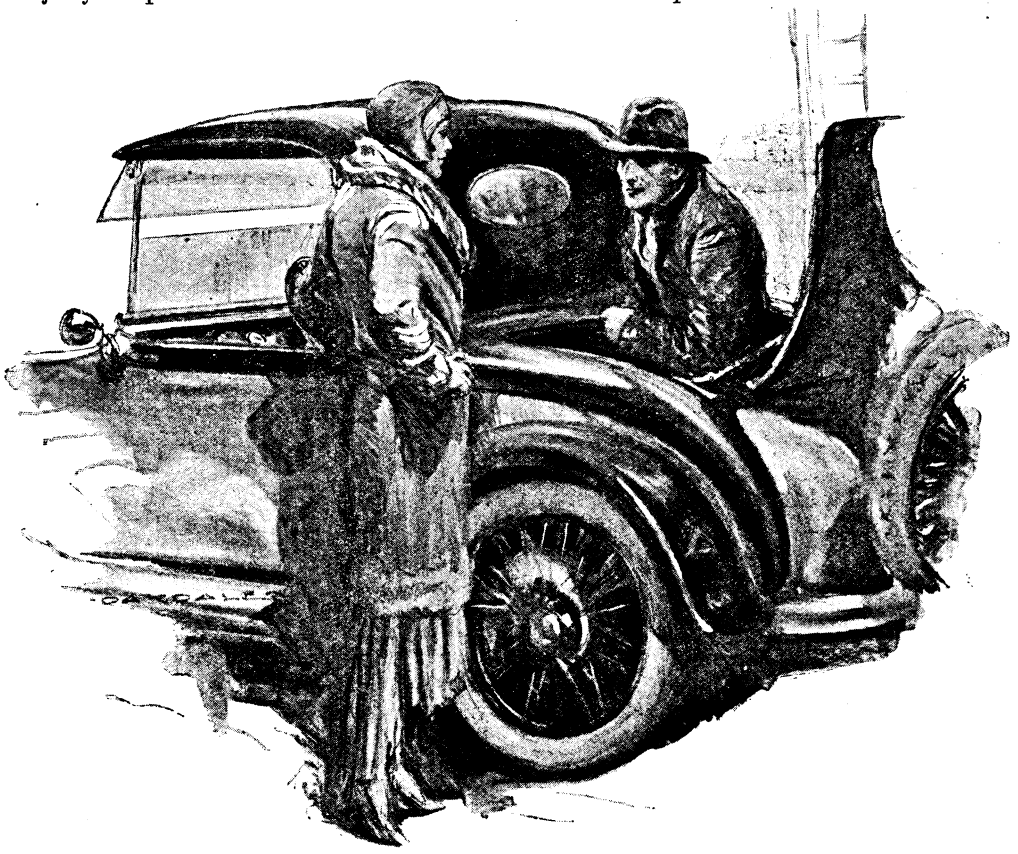
By HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

ILLUSTRATED BY E. G. OAKDALE

IN Victorian days dukes were indicted as being the worst-dressed men in Mayfair —except when they appeared resplendent as Knights of the Garter. One duke is reported to have said that wearing old clothes was his greatest privilege. Another magnate observed to the writer of this narrative that he was never so perfectly at ease as when, under the excuse of a cold in the head, he felt justified in ordering a " tray " to be sent to his private sitting-room, where, in dressing-gown and slippers, he could enjoy a juicy chop and a tankard of " bitter."

Dominic Saltoun was smoking a pipe on the Embankment, and gazing reflectively at the river, when we make his acquaintance. A self-respecting subject of the King might have hesitated before making his acquaintance, inasmuch as he looked uncommonly like a devil-may-care tramp, the sort of ingratiating " has been " who asks for food when he is thirsting for drink, and can lie like Ananias. Saltoun " dressed " this part, because, in his walks abroad, it relieved him of importunity.

From the open windows of a famous hotel



" She stepped out and addressed her passenger: ' May I ask what you are doing here? ' "

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floated the strains of a valse. Saltoun pulled a shabby cap over his eyes and sauntered across the road, approaching the entrance to the hotel. A car dashed up. Out of it sprang a young man.

He deserved more than a passing glance, tall, admirably proportioned, the pink of prosperity, obviously on the best of terms with himself. Saltoun chuckled. But he suppressed the chuckle when this gentleman —known to his friends (and others) as "Gorgeous George"—addressed him:

"Hi! You——! Want to earn a bob?"

Saltoun nodded.

"Keep an eye on this small 'bus for a few minutes."

"Right you are, guv'nor."

George hurried into the hotel. The car was hardly worthy of him, a two-seater with a dicky behind. In the dicky, which was open, Saltoun perceived a suitcase.

Five minutes later a young lady slowly approached the hotel, passed it, and drifted towards the car. She couldn't see Saltoun because he was on the other side of it. Nor did he see her till she opened the door, stepped in, and started the engine. For an instant Saltoun was paralysed by surprise. Not fifty yards away lounged a stout functionary in a gorgeous livery. Farther down, at a corner of the gardens opposite to the hotel, stood a policeman.

But the car was moving.

Saltoun scrambled into the dicky; the car sped down the Embankment. Through a small oval window he could see the thief——!

She was an accomplished driver; and looked as if she owned the car. For at least a minute Saltoun sat still, wondering what to do. Sooner or later congested traffic would hold them up. That would be the moment to invoke the majesty of the law.

If the young lady glanced back, she would see him. What would she do? Meanwhile he examined her, noting her hat, her coat, and the well-gloved hands on the steering-wheel.

They might be held up crossing Westminster Bridge. Not so. They whirled down Victoria Street, past Victoria Station, and in a jiffy were gliding into Chelsea. Saltoun said to himself: "I must set about earning that bob."

He tapped on the window. The driver glanced back and—accelerated. She betrayed no nervousness, but shot into a by-street, stopped the car, stepped out of it, and addressed her passenger:

"May I ask what you are doing here?"

Saltoun replied:

"A gentleman, who went into the hotel, left me in charge of his car."

"You seem to be an educated person."

"Thanks."

"Not at all. How do you know that this is his car? It may be mine."

"If you will be good enough to make that plain to the nearest constable, I shall have nothing more to say."

The young lady raised her brows.

"Nothing——? You have no curiosity?"

"Oh yes. Still, that might be gratified later."

"If," said the young lady sweetly, "you will take the trouble to read what is written on the label attached to that suitcase, you will learn my name and address. That doesn't prove that this car is mine, but it cuts out the police, doesn't it?"

Saltoun glanced at the label. The suitcase appeared to belong to a Miss Honor Brudenel, of the Summer House, Halton-on-Thames.

"You are Miss Brudenel?"

"I am. Who are you?"

"The Man in the Dicky. I can drive a car. I suggest that you allow me to drive this car back to the young gentleman who left me in charge of it. He must be getting anxious."

"Possibly; but I propose to drive to Halton-on-Thames. What are you going to do?"

"I shall sit here."

"For how long?"

"I don't know. I was instructed to keep an eye on the car; I shall do so."

"Really? I warn you that as soon as I reach home I shall lock the car into the garage."

Saltoun shrugged his shoulders. No policeman was in sight; and he reflected that if it came to charge and countercharge, such a self-possessed and clever young lady might have the best of it. To bow politely, return to his flat, change, and dine at his club would leave curiosity unsatisfied.

"If you lock me up, Miss Brudenel, you will have to feed me."

She hesitated. Then, without another word, she took her seat in the car and drove on.

II

WHEN the Summer House was reached Miss Brudenel glanced at the man in the dicky, who smiled.

"Who are you?" she asked for the second time. "Are you a gentleman?"

"Are there any gentlemen left?" he replied.

"I am going to lock up the car in the garage."

"I quite understand."

"Later, I shall send you out something to eat."

"Ever so many thanks."

"I may 'phone to the man who left the car in your charge. I am living alone here with two maids."

"Three little maids from school," murmured Saltoun.

"Quite able to take care of themselves, I can assure you."

"I need no such assurance."

"Why are you wearing that shabby old suit?"

"Why are you wearing a brand-new and very becoming hat?"

A maid appeared and took the suitcase into the bungalow. Two minutes later Saltoun found himself alone in a small garage with a window in the roof, and no exit except the double doors padlocked by Miss Brudenel.

"*Au revoir*," she had said, with an impeccable accent.

"*À tantôt*," replied Saltoun imperturbably.

What was going to come of this adventure? He had dismissed from his mind the conjecture that this young woman might be a thief; he was sure that the car was hers. But why had she treated the good-looking young fellow so cavalierly? In an odd way he felt sorry for him. However, if she rang him up, if he answered the bell, explanations would be in order. Meanwhile the drive from London had sharpened his appetite.

He took note of the number on the car and the maker's name. If he had to pass a summer's night in the garage, he could curl up inside the car and cover himself with a rug. . . .

III

HALF an hour later Miss Brudenel brought him a tray. She had provided cold pressed beef, a salad, and a pint of white wine. A napkin, not usually offered to tramps, advertised its significance.

Putting down the tray, Miss Brudenel said pleasantly:

"You have such a remarkable sense of duty, Mr.—a—Man in the *Dicky*, that I shall not lock the door. It concerns me a little that you may have to walk back to London, but there are 'buses and trains from Halton. Eat, drink, and be merry."

She flitted away.

Saltoun enjoyed his dinner and the pipe that followed.

"She is as curious as I am," he reflected. "And she did not say 'Good night.' I shall see her again."

A harvest moon was rising. He could not see the river, but he could hear the river traffic and smell new-mown hay. It was still daylight, although ten o'clock by summer time. His mind dwelt upon a punt built for two, a quiet backwater, and moonbeams filtering through the willows. . . .

He was refilling his pipe when Honor joined him.

"Out of consideration for you," she observed, "I have rung up the young man to whom this car does not belong. He will be here presently in his car. Possibly he will offer you a lift back."

"I'm perfectly happy where I am, Miss Brudenel."

"You know I've a sort of hunch that you are one of the idle rich."

"I have a hunch that you're a river girl."

She looked a river girl, slim, sun-tanned, and full of vitality.

"I adore the river."

"My first love, too."

"You were a wet-bob at Eton?"

"I was," he replied absently.

"Ah! I've made you give yourself away. One up to me. Would you like to see my garden?"

"I am pledged to keep an eye on the car."

"You can lock the garage and keep the key."

"Top marks——!"

They sauntered through a gate into a garden which sloped to the river. Saltoun saw a well-cushioned punt chained to a post.

"When are you expecting your friend?"

"He will be here in less than an hour."

"Part of that hour might be spent on the river."

"The same thought occurred to me. Can you punt?"

"I can."

As she unchained the punt Saltoun removed his shabby coat, waistcoat, collar and tie, rolling up the sleeves of a soft silk shirt. He flung his cap upon his coat. In loose grey flannel trousers and silk shirt, he stood before her quite "presentable." She stepped into the punt and lay down upon the cushions. Saltoun lifted the pole. Slowly the punt nosed its way up-stream.

IV

THE spirit of adventure hovered above. Neither spoke, but Honor's eyes were probing. Saltoun was aware that she was sizing him up, peering beneath the surface. Her left hand trailed in the water. The silence between them became intimate, so much so that he feared to break it.

"Why are you frowning?" she asked.

"You want to know?"

"Yes."

With a vigorous stroke of the pole he directed the passage of the punt through rushes and loosestrife and under an overhanging willow. Then he thrust the pole deep into the mud of the river-bed, and sat down at his end of the punt.

"I frowned because in a few minutes I shall pass out of your life as swiftly as I butted into it."

"Oh-h-h!"

"You see, I believe in a world governed by design. I had three engagements for to-night. I cut the lot, put on my tramp's kit, pottered down to the Embankment, and was at the loosest of loose ends. Now I'm alone in a punt with you. Why?"

Suddenly her face became troubled. She gave a shrug of protest as if to say: "Now you've torn it; why not let 'well' alone?" This startling change affected him. He had said to himself: "This girl is a jolly 'flouncer,'" as a word often in his grandmother's mouth came back to him. That dear good lady had denounced as "flouncers" all young women who cocked their pates at an unconventional angle and went their untrammelled ways down ways which were not Victorian.

"Are you unhappy?" he asked.

She made no reply.

"Obviously you are."

"I'm—I'm frightened."

"Of yourself, or of someone else?"

They looked at each other. . . .

She broke the silence.

"You say you believe in a world governed by design?"

"I do—most emphatically."

"Do you mean that a mad impulse of mine was no impulse?"

"If you told me more I might answer your question. Impulse is instinct in action. Did impulse urge you to jump into that car?"

"Yes."

"And you speak of it as 'mad'?"

"I—I felt mad at the moment; but now——"

Her voice died away.

Saltoun hesitated. To ask for further confidence would be an admission that he wished to help her, if he could. But Miss Brudenel might be amusing herself at his expense. . . .

"Carry on," he said quietly. "You have said too much or too little. You jumped into that car, and a minute or two afterwards you saw me in the dicky. I took you to be a thief—and you are."

"What——?"

"You have stolen my peace of mind, because you have lost your own. If I can help you in any way, let me do it, but—on conditions."

"Conditions?"

"No reservations. If love at first sight is possible, the same can be said of friendship. Time cuts no ice in these matters. I have drifted past men; and I have said to myself: 'I could make a pal of that fellow.' Contact was established in passing. I have not touched your hand yet, but contact has been established. So, if you feel as I do, speak out frankly."

"All right; I will. I hate speaking out; I—I jumped into my car impulsively because I funked speaking out."

Then she told her story with little intermittencies of silence, with appealing inflections of voice and changing expressions of face. From first to last there was no whining, no self-pity. To put it brutally, she was well aware that she had made a fool of herself. . . . The man who had left the two-seater in Saltoun's charge had taken her car to order dinner; she had promised to join him. They were dining early with the intention of doing a show afterwards. She had seen her car. Impulse, whether mad or sane, had swept her off her feet. She wanted to escape without explanations and recriminations. He wasn't a fool. He

would guess what had happened. But—a big BUT—he had a temper. . . . She was afraid of his temper. . . . She had made up her mind not to dine with him. To say so might provoke a scene in public. . . . He was capable of that. . . . And now a scene in private was inevitable. She had rung him up, told him that she had gone home; and he, in a rage because she had rushed off without leaving a message, was on his way to her. When she had asked him not to come he had "rung off." . . .

"I must go back and meet him," she concluded.

"Isn't this a lovers' quarrel?"

"There has been no quarrel—yet. My mind is made up. I tried to make the best of him, but he made the worst of himself. I went on pretending, till something snapped. It has helped me to tell you this, but you can't help me when he comes. We must have it out."

"You funk that?"

"Horribly."

She shivered.

"I'll meet him. I can tell him, which is perfectly true, that I'm your friend."

She gave a nervous laugh.

"He doesn't even know your name—nor do I. He will recognise you as the man with whom he left the car. You are very kind, but what you suggest is hardly practical politics, is it?"

"I don't care what it is if it saves you a beastly quarter of an hour."

She gazed at him searchingly.

"You are rather a wonderful person, but I must do this on my own. I think we ought to go back to the bungalow. If—if you don't mind waiting in the garage, I'll tell you what happens after he has gone."

V

WHEN Saltoun went back to the garage, after leaving her in the garden, he remembered that she was still in ignorance of his name. As if that mattered. At parting she had held out her hand, letting it lie for a moment in his. He had ventured to press it reassuringly.

They had little time to spare. Saltoun heard a horn that suggested the grunt of an infuriated rhino, and a huge car, a moment later, glided up to the front door of the bungalow. . . .

The garage was seventy-five feet away. Saltoun could see nothing, being inside it, but he could hear a growling male voice, and then Honor's quiet tones.

"Come into the garden."

Saltoun puffed at his pipe, thinking of the big young man and the slim young woman. Could she deal adequately with the situation? Was she scared stiff, poor darling?

He tried to put himself in the man's place—and winced. To be told by the girl you loved that she couldn't stick you any longer——! Enough to make any man see red.

About the whole affair there was something eerie, unreal, like a scene in a melodrama. Punting Honor back to the bungalow, she had told him that her parents were dead. She had small independent means; she owned the bungalow; she had "made" the garden. And in her "Summer House" she had passed a dreary winter, too much alone. Then this rich young man had "rushed" at her. . . . The *lacunæ* in the text were easily filled in. . . . She had wanted what he could give more than she had wanted him. But he had wanted her. . . . Saltoun felt sorry for him.

How would it end?

Would she yield, as before, to importunity?

He opened the doors of the garage and peered out. Half-way to the river, overlooking it, stood a gazebo semicircled by a cypress fence, containing a table and chairs. It was certain that Honor would take him there. He could catch the sound of voices. . . . He heard the distant roar of the weir.

He hummed to himself, "Ole man, river—ole man, river—he just keeps rollin' along——!"

A few minutes later he heard a cry, a strangled cry with pain in it. Instinct developed into action. He hurried through the gate, crossed the sloping lawn, and stood still opposite the gazebo. He had one glimpse—quite enough—of Honor's face. The man was gripping her slender arm—glaring at her. . . . He dropped her arm and glared at Saltoun.

"Who the devil are you?" he asked savagely.

"I'm the devil who has earned more than a bob."

"I forgot to tell you," said Honor. "He jumped into the dicky."

"If everything is O.K., guv'nor, I'll take my bob, and me hook too. It's late."

"How did you know I was here?"

"Heard your voice," mumbled Saltoun.

The man fished half a crown out of his pocket and tossed it to Saltoun, who caught it deftly. As he did so Honor stepped out of the gazebo.

"Good night—and good-bye, George."

She passed Saltoun, walking towards the house. He touched his cap, still mumbling:

"Thank you for a nice ride, lady."



"He dropped her arm and stared at Saltoun. 'Who the devil are you?' he asked savagely."

George, who was standing up, sat down, staring at Saltoun.

"You can off it," he said sullenly.

"Not yet, my man."

George sprang up. The feigned voice of the out-at-elbows tramp was gone. Instead, to his amazement, he heard the tones of one accustomed to be obeyed, the unmistakable tones of Authority.

"You are Gorgeous George," said Saltoun dryly. "Probably we shall meet again. I suggest that *you* off it; and I shall not ask you for a lift back to London."

George sneered.

"I'm wise. So you were employed

by her as a 'tec. That's a bit thick."

"You are not wise. Miss Brudenel did not employ me. She has no idea who I am; nor have you. But you can take it from me that I know you, and all about you. Go at once—and don't come back."

There was a pause as eye met eye. It is perhaps to the credit of Gorgeous George that he went without further parley. Saltoun accompanied him to the garden gate; Saltoun "stood by" till George had gone. Then he returned to the garage. Honor must have heard the big car leaving her small premises. She found Saltoun in the dicky.

"He has gone——?"



"You will never see him again, Miss Brudenel; but I may. What you call instinct has served you faithfully to-night."

"I don't understand——"

"Tell me—did instinct whisper to you that this handsome young man was not quite what he appeared to be?" She nodded, too breathless to speak. "And instinct urged you to confide in me, a stranger?" She nodded again. "Good! Trust your instincts."

"But—who are you?"

"I am Sir Dominic Saltoun, head of the Criminal Investigation Department. I must apologise, because I believed you to be one of a clever gang of crooks."

"You—you mean that he is a crook?"

"Yes."

"Heavens! What an escape I have had!"

"If I may venture to spring a *cliché* on you: 'Once bit, twice shy.'"

"He was bitten. He wanted me. Why?"

"I do not blame him for that. Indeed, I feel rather sorry for him. Still——"

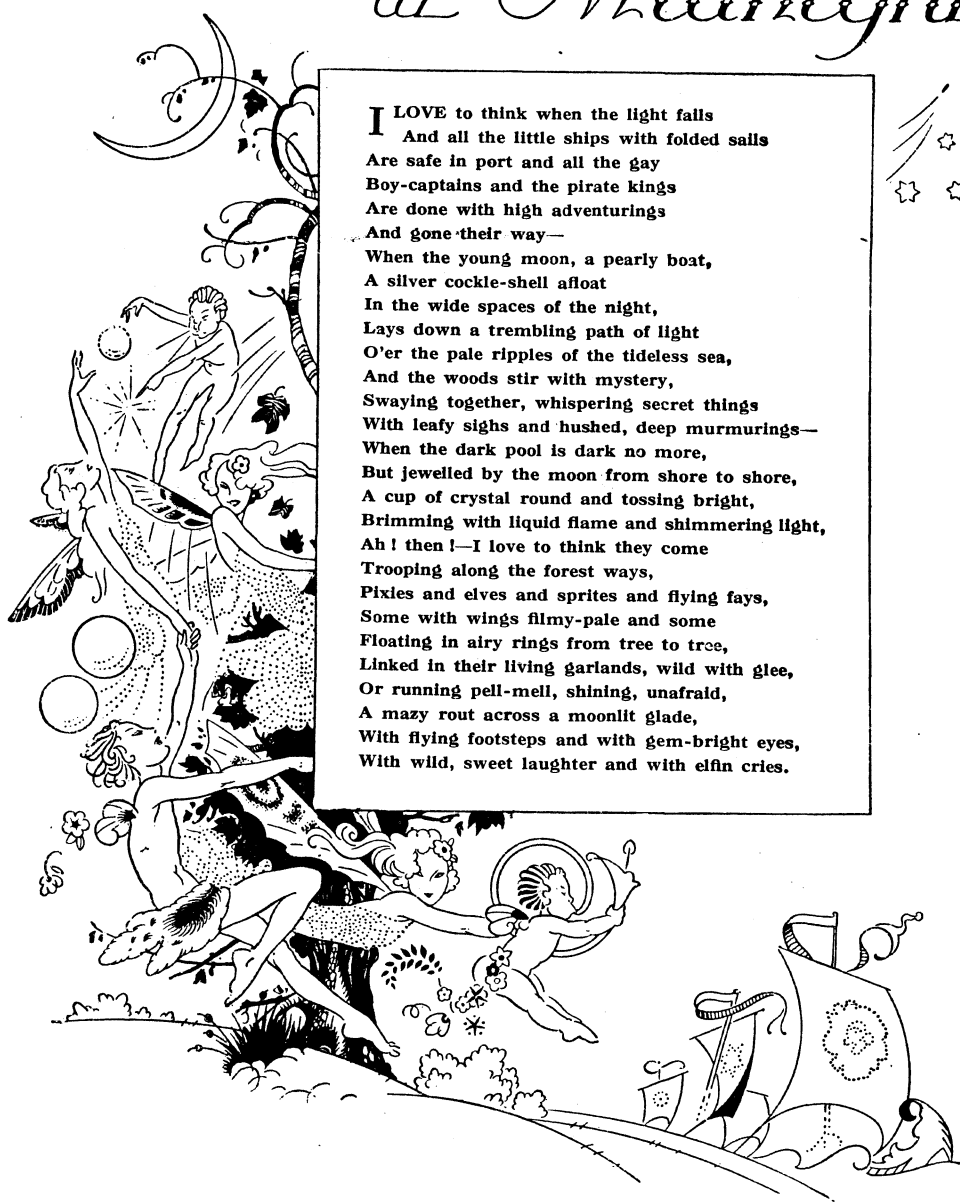
"Yes?"

"One more *cliché*. His loss may be another fellow's gain."

Lady Saltoun is often asked why she calls Sir Dominic—Dicky. Having a sense of humour, she is tempted to reply: "Oh, you must ask Gorgeous George about that." Instead, she murmurs vaguely: "Well, you see when I first saw him he was sitting in a dicky, sitting in it, you understand, not wearing it."

A month ago a big fat baby boy was christened—RICHARD.

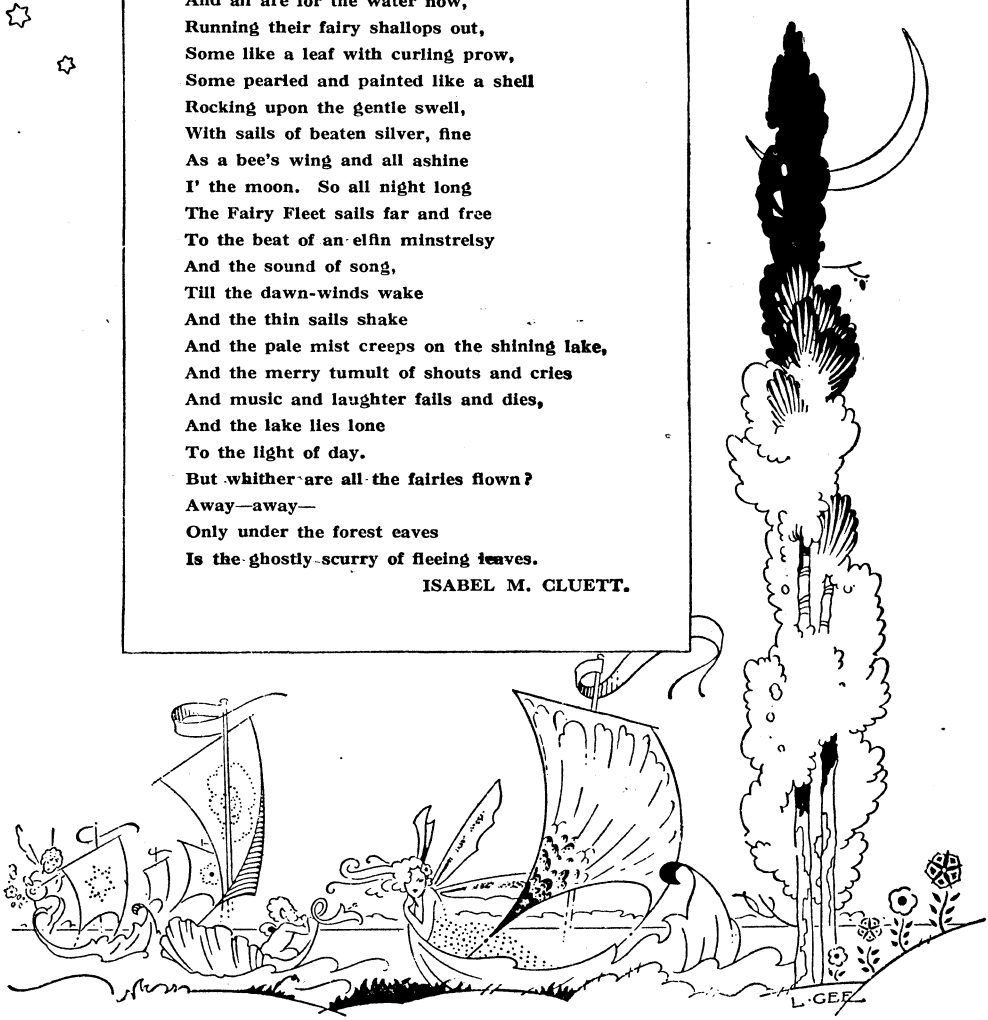
The Round Pond at Midnight



I LOVE to think when the light falls
And all the little ships with folded sails
Are safe in port and all the gay
Boy-captains and the pirate kings
Are done with high adventurings
And gone their way—
When the young moon, a pearly boat,
A silver cockle-shell afloat
In the wide spaces of the night,
Lays down a trembling path of light
O'er the pale ripples of the tideless sea,
And the woods stir with mystery,
Swaying together, whispering secret things
With leafy sighs and hushed, deep murmurings—
When the dark pool is dark no more,
But jewelled by the moon from shore to shore,
A cup of crystal round and tossing bright,
Brimming with liquid flame and shimmering light,
Ah! then!—I love to think they come
Trooping along the forest ways,
Pixies and elves and sprites and flying fays,
Some with wings filmy-pale and some
Floating in airy rings from tree to tree,
Linked in their living garlands, wild with glee,
Or running pell-mell, shining, unafraid,
A mazy rout across a moonlit glade,
With flying footsteps and with gem-bright eyes,
With wild, sweet laughter and with elfin cries.

Down to the shining pool, the shining rout
Has swept with many a silvery shout
And all are for the water now,
Running their fairy shallops out,
Some like a leaf with curling prow,
Some pearled and painted like a shell
Rocking upon the gentle swell,
With sails of beaten silver, fine
As a bee's wing and all ashine
I' the moon. So all night long
The Fairy Fleet sails far and free
To the beat of an elfin minstrelsy
And the sound of song,
Till the dawn-winds wake
And the thin sails shake
And the pale mist creeps on the shining lake,
And the merry tumult of shouts and cries
And music and laughter fails and dies,
And the lake lies lone
To the light of day.
But whither are all the fairies flown?
Away—away—
Only under the forest eaves
Is the ghostly scurry of fleeing leaves.

ISABEL M. CLUETT.



Pear-Tree Cottage



By Archibald Marshall

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK INSALL

SOME of those who knew him talked of John Henty as a lucky man. But he would not have called himself so.

It was true that at the age of thirty-five he held a position of responsibility in the City and was making a good income. But there had not been much luck in that; it was due to a good head and hard work. He had begun as scarcely more than a boy, with no influence behind him, and worked up so that at the age of twenty-five he was able to marry. Then the war broke things up for him, but afterwards he came back, with his self-reliance and his powers greatly increased, and within a few years made his way to the front. Not much luck about that. The war had taught him many things, but he had been wounded, and his right arm was useless for the playing of games, though he was strong and fit otherwise.

Only a cynic could have called him lucky in the way he had lost his wife. She had gone off with another man, just about the time he was lying in a Base Hospital in France, and now she was dead. He had put her out of his mind, and seemed to have accepted his position as a man who would go through the rest of his life alone.

Well, there are many who are quite content to do so, and there are also many caught up in the toils of matrimony who might envy such a one as John Henty, with nobody to please but himself, with work that he liked and was successful in, and plenty of money for whatever pursuits he might take up outside it.

But if his marriage had not been too much of a success while it lasted, and had ended in utter failure, there was one thing he had in it which made up for everything else while it lasted. He had a child, and the child died, not in early infancy, but just when it had begun to walk and prattle. When he heard of its death out in France he thought he would never get over it. He was deliberately careless of his life, which was perhaps partly the reason why he got honour and advancement out of the war, and was able to make use of it afterwards. It was now seven years since he had lost his little girl, and he hadn't got over it yet, though he never talked about her.

ONE Saturday afternoon in May John Henty went for a walk in the country. It was his only form of outdoor recreation, and he usually took his walks alone, partly because he had few intimate friends, partly because those he had were at such times playing the games from which he was debarred.

He took the train to Stanhope Heath, and meant to walk out into the country from there, get back to a late dinner at his club and play bridge afterwards, if he could

find a four on Saturday night. No very exciting prospect, but he did enjoy these lonely walks and his dinner after them, because they made him feel so fit.

But first of all he had a little pilgrimage to make. It would bring him small satisfaction, but he had been thinking about his past life of late, and this place was connected with one of the points at which it seemed to have gone wrong.

HE had married when his income had been so small that it would barely support married life, and had begun in a tiny flat, where he and Doris had been happy enough for a year, though by the end of that time the bloom had worn off a bit. For they had few tastes in common, and she didn't manage their little income well, so that he was never quite free from anxiety about it, and had to reduce his personal expenditure to the minimum, to provide for what she wanted. It was then that he had begun his Saturday afternoon walks, because he must have some exercise and could no longer afford to play cricket and football.

One afternoon in March he took the train to Stanhope Heath, as a start for his country walk, and on his way from the station came across an old-fashioned cottage in a big garden. It was the prettiest little place imaginable, with trees all about it, and nothing but houses with still larger gardens in front and on either side. And it was to let. There was a board up at the gate, which led into the long garden in front, where the daffodils were just beginning to scatter their sunshine.

John went in, and found a woman cleaning up after the last tenancy. So he was able to go over the house. It had one large sitting-room and a roomy old-fashioned kitchen behind. Upstairs there were three bedrooms. Behind, there was twice as much ground as in front, part kitchen-garden, part orchard, and then came open fields. Really a treasure of a little house, even in those days liable to be snapped up at any moment, though, as the woman pointed out, it wanted a lot doing to it. She wasn't sure about the rent, he must apply to the agents for that, but she mentioned a figure that almost took John's breath away.

He had an impulse to go straight back to London to tell Doris about it. But she would probably be out, and anyhow he wanted his exercise. So he walked on into the country, pleased and excited, and thought it all out.

The rent was less than half of what they were paying for the flat. With rates and season-ticket added, something would still be saved. And they would save money in other ways. Less would be spent on amusements. They would have their pretty little house to take a pleasure in, and the garden would keep him employed every hour he could spare for it. He knew nothing about gardening, but always thought he could make himself happy with it. He had even wanted to take one of those little houses that were being built in rows all about Harrow when he married. But Doris had preferred the flat. She turned up her nose at the suburbs.

But Stanhope Heath was still country, though so near London, and Pear-Tree Cottage was as different from a new little villa in a row as anything well could be. Doris would be as keen as he was. What a house for them, and for the child that was coming! He had his vision of home and wife and child as he walked through the spring country, and was as happy as a king in his anticipations.

But Doris wasn't at all keen. No bathroom, no electric light! What could he be thinking of? And to take her away from all her friends, and from the shops, and plant her down in the suburbs—well then, in the country, which was worse—just when her baby was coming! And so on.

She wouldn't even go to look at the house, and he had to give up the idea of it. He might have stood out but for the baby, which was coming very soon now. She made the most of that, and the baby was born in the poky little flat, and died there, two years later.

NEW houses had been built near the station since John had last seen Stanhope Heath, but it had not yet lost its country aspect, and the quiet lane in which Pear-Tree Cottage was situated was not altered at all. He had a curious sense of the past repeating itself when he saw a board up at the gate. But this time the cottage was for sale. There are not many houses to be let in these days.

It was far more attractive than it had been nine years before. The great pear-tree which gave it its name was a pyramid of snow. Lilacs and laburnums were in bloom, and May-flowering tulips in the long border by the path leading to the house.

Whoever had lived there last had paid great attention to the garden; and the house looked more cared for too.

There was a man scything the long grass which had grown on the lawn, and he had opened the windows of the house to air it.

The old open fireplace had been put back in the sitting-room and oak beams uncovered. An ugly modern window had been taken out and a leaded one put in, to go with the rest. Both money and taste had gone to making it what it had become.



"There was a man scything the long grass which had grown on the lawn, and he had opened the window of the house to air it."

So once more John was able to go over the place.

It was now what the house agents call a "little gem." A working kitchen had been built on behind with a bathroom above.

Once again John walked on into the country, pleased and excited, though less so than on that occasion nine years before, because nothing now had quite the same flavour. Somehow, it had never occurred

to him to live in the country since the war, but he had made up his mind immediately to buy Pear-Tree Cottage, and to change his life entirely. There was still something to be got out of it.

tage was still in the market, probably because its owner was holding out for a higher price than even it was worth. But he would not haggle about it. If he could get something off, so much the better; if



The price he would have to pay, if the gardener's estimate had been right, rather amused him. He reckoned it out at about five times the value that had been put upon the cottage only nine years before. But people will pay almost anything for such "little gems" nowadays. Pear-Tree Cot-

not, the few hundreds extra would not matter, since he was not spending half his income.

A MONTH later he had installed himself. He had no skill in furnishing, and didn't get as much fun out of that as

he and Doris had got out of furnishing the little flat. In fact, he left it almost entirely to a furnishing house. The rooms were comfortable and convenient, but lacked the touch that a woman would have given to them, or a man whose tastes ran in that direction. He enjoyed his garden, in the fine June weather, but it had been so fully planted that there was nothing left for him to do in that way, even if he had known what to do. He left the actual work of keeping it in order to the gardener, and took pleasure in the result, but not nearly so much as if any of the making of it had been his own.

AS the summer went on he began to doubt whether he had done wisely in burying himself in the country. That was how he had come to put it to himself, just as Doris might have done. He liked waking up to the quiet and beauty of it, and it enhanced the interest of his work, which was done in very different surroundings. He liked coming home in the summer evenings, and strolling and sitting in his garden before and after dinner. But he was now cut off from his fellows, and from the distractions that were so ready to hand in London. He was not much of a reader, and had no accomplishments to give him occupation. In wet weather he hardly knew what to do with himself, and took to going to bed at ten o'clock. He took long walks on Saturday and Sunday, and sometimes had a man to stay with him for the week-end. There was not room for more than one, and the number of his acquaintances whom he cared to have with him alone for a day and a half was strictly limited.

He made no friends in the place itself. He was shy and seemed to be stand-offish, and he did not join the golf or tennis clubs, where he might have got to know people. He got it into his head that they didn't want to know him, and the life of the place went by him. He might really have been buried in the country instead of living in a populous place half an hour's journey from London.

THE fact was that this man was cut out by nature to be a husband and father. The work that he did so successfully lost half its value because he had only himself to do it for, and couldn't use the money it brought him for himself alone. He had his home, but his home was empty because there was no love in it.

HE took his month's holiday in the middle of August, and had almost made up his mind by that time to go back to London for the winter. He would know what to do with his evenings at any rate. But he still felt that Pear-Tree Cottage held something for him, and didn't want to give it up altogether.

He went to a hotel on the Yorkshire coast, bathed every day and took long walks over the moors. Life still had zest for him, and he made friends, rather to his surprise, with a whole family staying in the same hotel.

These were a Colonel and Mrs. Maitland, their three daughters and two sons. Only one of the girls was grown up. The others were between nine and seventeen, a jolly crew of boys and girls who enjoyed life immensely and liked to have him with them, in spite of his advanced years. He made great friends with the younger boy, who was just the age that his own child would have reached if she had lived, and the affection he showed for this child drew the whole family towards him.

He thought it odd afterwards that he had not at once fallen in love with Sibyl, the eldest girl. When he could no longer disguise from himself the fact that he had done so, almost against his will, he very nearly packed up and went away, to save himself further trouble. For how was it possible that she could come to return his feeling? She was fifteen years younger than he was, and he already looked upon himself as middle-aged.

But her companionship was so sweet to him that he couldn't tear himself away. He held back as much as he could, and had the additional sweetness of drawing from her signs that she certainly didn't want that. He had known nothing like these alternate hopes and fears in his first wooing, which had ended almost as soon as it had begun.

Apparently Colonel and Mrs. Maitland saw nothing, or else had no objection to what they might have seen. They were not too well off, with a large country house which cost a lot to keep up, and a family to educate. Sibyl was at work in London, at a library. Her holiday would come to an end at the same time as John's, and they were pleased that he should escort her back, and that he would take her out sometimes. This confirmed him in his intention of going back to London for the winter, and yet, supposing he should have the bliss to win her for his own, wouldn't Pear-Tree Cottage make a wonderful home for them, at least

at first, with something in it that he had never had yet?

Ah, but he must make allowances. She was young, and wanted life and pleasure. She wouldn't be like Doris had been over it, wanting nothing else. But he must make himself her companion, and not expect her didn't tell him why, but said she would let him know if she couldn't.

IT was pleasant enough to come home on a fine September evening. The garden was bright with flowers he had not seen before, the house was fresh and cosy, with



"The vision of the room as it would be if it were her room as well as his rose before him."

just to adapt herself in being his. With her he would have more in life than he had ever had, wherever they lived.

But she showed herself interested in what he told her about the Cottage, and he offered to take her to see it on the next Saturday afternoon. She wasn't quite sure whether she would be able to come, and a log-fire burning on the open hearth of the sitting-room. The elderly woman who looked after him so well gave him smiling welcome. But it all made his loneliness more apparent, and he terribly missed the family life he had been enjoying, and above all Sibyl's bright companionship.

His spirits soon sank. It seemed im-

possible now that she should love him in the way that he loved her. Surely he had been deceiving himself! She liked him as a friend. He was so much older and graver than she that she could never have thought of him as a lover, and it would spoil everything if he were so to declare himself.

HE had not heard from her by the time he left his office on Saturday afternoon, and was in a black mood as he went home alone. Of course she was amusing herself with girls of her own age, or perhaps with men. It was natural enough, but she might have let him know.

Oh, well, the dream was over. He must take up his life as it had been before, but he couldn't stand Pear-Tree Cottage any longer, whether in winter or summer. He would get rid of it as soon as possible and go back to London.

As he walked up and down by the flower-border, seeing it but not seeing it, his heart seemed almost empty of emotion. He wasn't even longing for Sibyl. That would come later. He wasn't even thinking of her. His mind was in a deep shadow, in which his thoughts were nevertheless clear, so that he could occupy himself with his plans, and take interest, though no pleasure, in them.

But the love was there none the less, and the whole texture of his thought was changed as if by a blinding flash of light when he turned and saw her coming through the garden gate.

She was smiling at him. "Why didn't you ring me up?" she said. "I tried to get through to you twice this morning, and then I was busy, and when I did get through they said you had gone. So I thought the best thing was to come after you."

She laughed, and slipped her arm into his, in the friendly girl's way which had first attracted him to her. "Really, this is too enchanting," she said, looking round at the enclosed garden and the nestling little house. "I've been longing to see it."

In the complete revulsion of his feeling he found nothing to say. It was wonderful to have her there, and already the cottage had taken on a new aspect, something beyond what his thoughts had ever given it.

She was eager to see the inside of it. She laughed when she stood in the sitting-room. "It would be lovely with proper curtains, and with some chintzes on these expensive leather chairs," she said. "And some bookshelves. Haven't you any books, my dear?"

That charming friendliness! Was there anything behind it? He would never know unless he put it to the test. Otherwise it would always be his. But he wanted more. How much he wanted it he had never known until now. The vision of the room as it would be if it were her room as well as his rose before him. And with her always there when he came home to it!

It was too much for him. He took her sweet face between his hands and looked into her eyes. "You can do what you like with the room and with me and with everything," he said, "if you will love me as I love you."

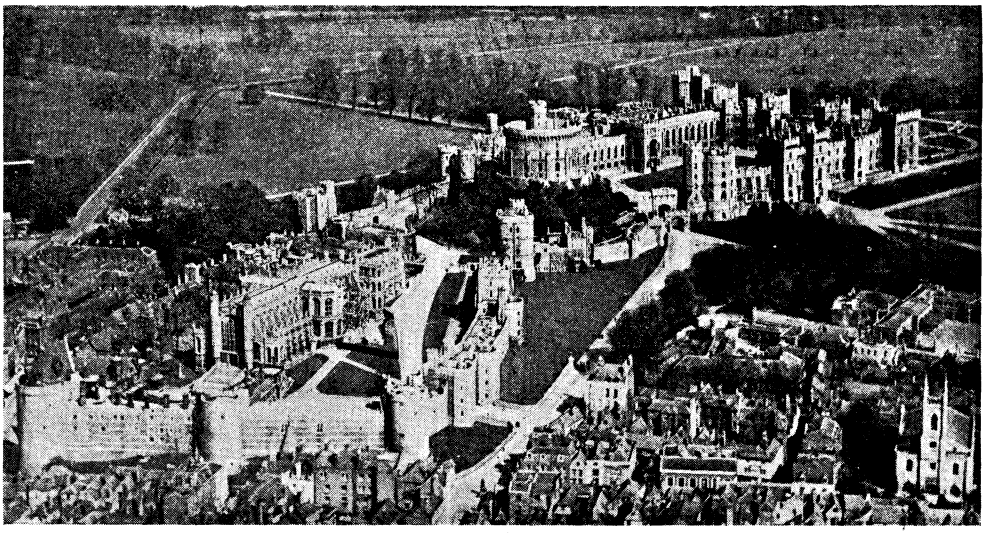
She faltered a moment, and then nestled against him. "Yes, I will," she said. "I would go anywhere with you, but it will make it perfect to come here."

"VIGIL."

BY day a slender poplar rears
Its slim spires to the sky,
The wind bestirs its trembling leaves
With a deep, longing sigh.

But when I look out to the moon
And the strange starlight:
Keeping vigil till the dawn
Stands a tall, silver Knight . . .

OLGA OGAN.



[*Aerofilms.*

WINDSOR CASTLE AS SEEN FROM THE AIR.

SEEING BRITAIN BY 'PLANE

By the HON. MRS. FORBES-SEMPILL

Mrs. Forbes-Sempill, with her husband, the Master of Sempill, President of the Royal Aeronautica Society, has flown as a passenger a great deal, and is an enthusiast for air-touring.

THE beauties of Britain are world-famed ; though small in extent, the British Isles provide every kind of scenery, from plains to mountains ; and everyone—except Britons !—realises that this country is one of the finest holiday areas in the world.

However one may travel, one is sure of obtaining intense enjoyment, but I say definitely that no one—no matter how well-travelled—has seen Britain at her glorious best until he or she has taken a holiday by 'plane. One gains a new impression of the infinite variety of scenery, and one sees everything in proper perspective.

The motorist sees only flashes of beautiful country ; just as he comes to some lovely spot a high hedge or a wall intervenes and the view is lost. But the air tourist experiences no such annoyances. Flying is like taking a high hill around with you—except that, when you want a more extended panorama, you can climb a little, and when you feel like a " close-up " you can fly quite low, so that every detail of the landscape can be discerned.

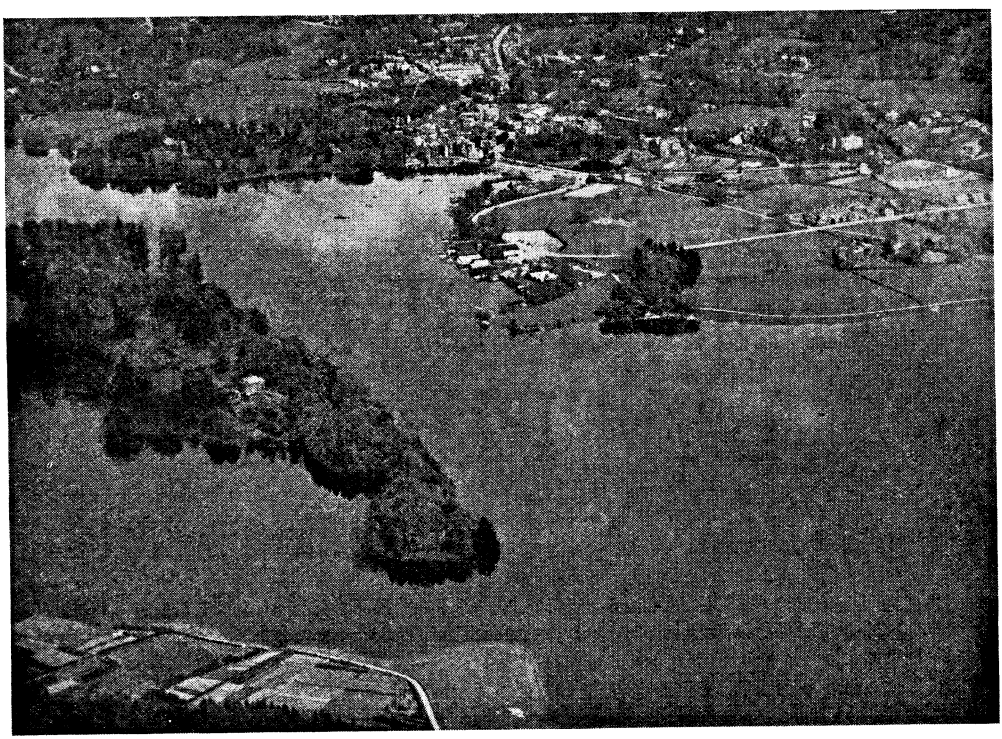
I made my first acquaintance with the air holiday some four years or so ago, when I did a four-days' Whitsun trip with my husband. That was in the first " Moth " ever made and was before light aeroplanes had become the deservedly popular little fly-abouts they are to-day. It was something of a pioneer effort in its way—though I claim no credit for that ; I was merely the passenger !—but, in spite of the lack there then was of any sort of organisation, I enjoyed every moment of the tour. We

travelled 800 miles during the four days and never once landed on an aerodrome until our return to Stag Lane, near Edgware.

Later in that same summer we made a further trip, this time in a larger and more powerful machine (a D.H. 51. 120 horse-power) in order to make some visits in Scotland. That I enjoyed even more, because I had got over the first novelty and could take more interest in the scenery. It quite converted me to the air-holiday; so much so, indeed, that nowadays the crush at station barriers and the awful congestion on the roads during the summer appal me.

assist the flyer are coming into existence, the path of the air-tourist is being smoothed wonderfully, which is all to the good because it means that so many more can enjoy the thrills of holiday-making in the air. There are not aerodromes everywhere, but the aviator, no matter where he goes, will find that people are amazingly helpful and willing to assist in every way they can. Perhaps —though this may sound a little ungrateful —a few of them are just a shade *too* helpful!

After having experienced the joys of a trip by light seaplane, however, I am convinced that this is by far the better way to see



[*Aerofilms.*

WINDERMERE.

Both these tours were undertaken in ordinary aeroplanes, and we landed in fields or on the sands in preference to aerodromes, in order to prove that aerial touring could be done without elaborate preparation or special organisation. There was quite a lot of fun then in coming down unexpectedly in a field, for a crowd would collect just as if there were an accident. Nowadays, air touring is becoming so common that the sight of an aeroplane at close range is not specially interesting.

Now that there are so many flying-clubs, and all sorts of organisations and services to

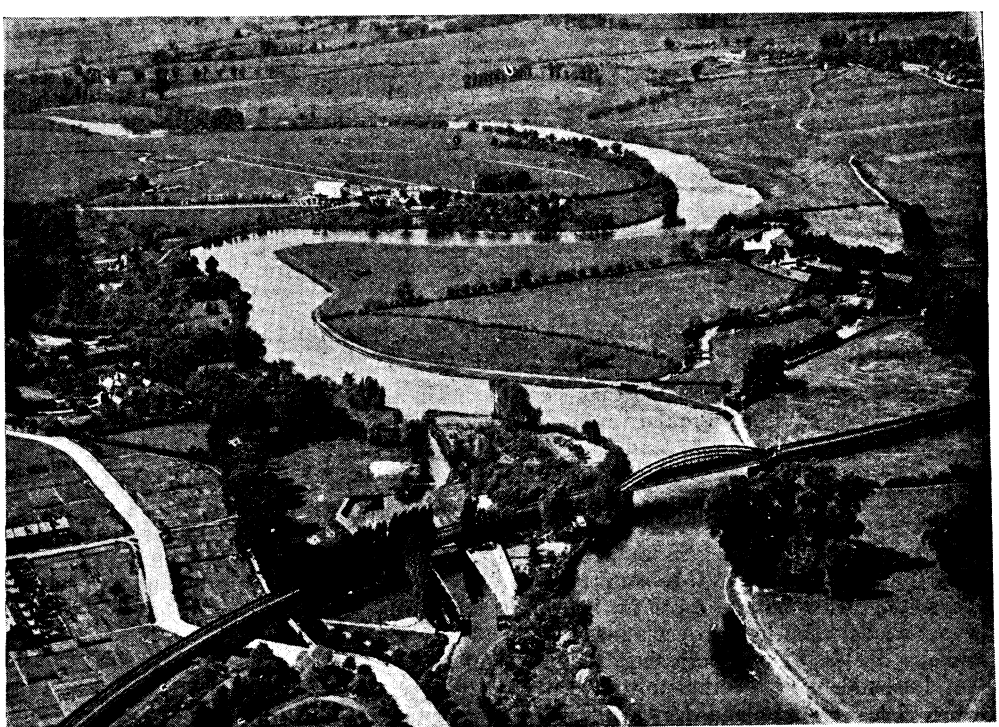
Britain from the air. I am far from decrying the aeroplane holiday; that, as I have said, is thoroughly delightful. But, taking it all round, and weighing up advantages and disadvantages from the passenger's point of view, I prefer the seaplane tour on account of its greater interest and the greater freedom it confers.

To talk of "freedom" in connection with machines which can alight only on water may sound a trifle ridiculous. But it is a fact that in England, and even more in Scotland, the seaplane pilot is safe where the aeroplane pilot is taking risks. If you look at a map



[*Aerofilms.*

SNOW ON THE HILLS, AYRSHIRE.



[*Aerofilms.*

THE WINDING THAMES NEAR STAINES.

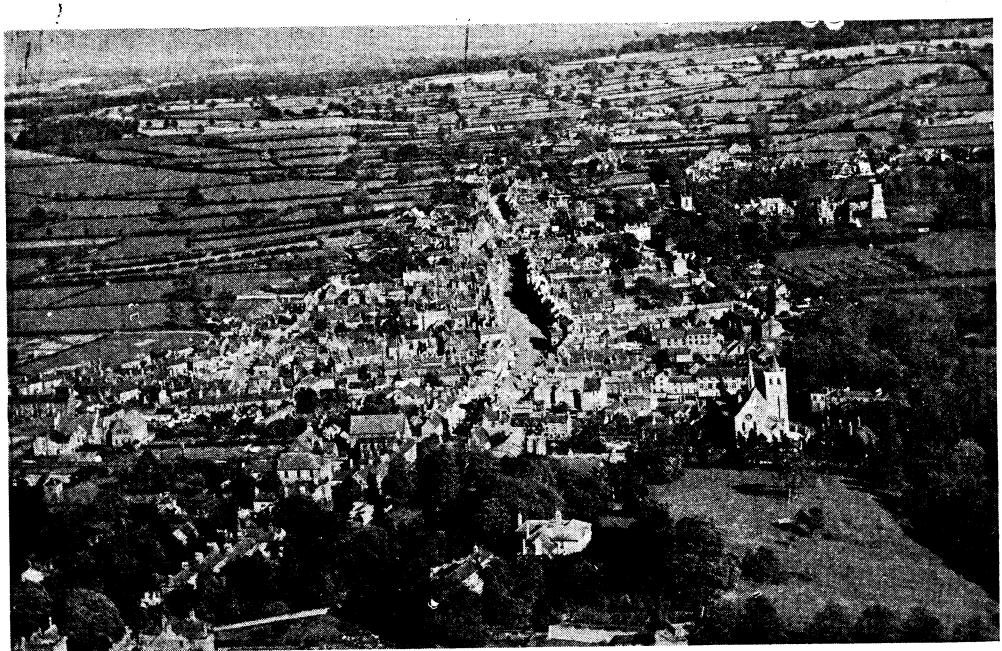
of Great Britain—a fairly large-scale one for choice—you will see a multitude of rivers, canals and little lakes, and there is no spot which is very far from the coast.

Taking-off and landing in a seaplane are far more exciting than rolling over an aerodrome, and flying over the sea is free from those " bumps " which many who have had experience of air-travel still find irritating and objectionable, though I rather enjoy them—in small doses they break the monotony. This, of course, is because over the sea there are no hills or valleys to set up stray air currents.

When touring by seaplane the long hops are always made over the sea, so that there is an emergency landing " ground " available all the way. But even overland I always feel safer in a seaplane. There are all those rivers, canals and lakes—even reservoirs, when the summer is not too dry !—to offer refuge in times of trouble ; in fact, the seaplane flying overland in this country has actually a greater margin of safety than has the aeroplane when flying over sea—as, for example, on the Channel crossing.

My husband made a complete tour of the British Isles by seaplane last August: I accompanied him part of the time. He flew up the East Coast from the Thames, making Hartlepool his first stop ; and next day finished his first stage on a reservoir 1,000 feet up in the Peebleshire hills. Here the handiness of the seaplane for touring was made manifest, for the machine was moored close up to the bank by means of ropes slung round a tree.

The next day he landed at Martnaham Loch, near Ayr, close to where I was staying at the time, and I joined him. Here, the little 'plane was anchored amongst the water-lilies. During the following four days we flew over quite a lot of Scotland, visiting several of the islands off the west coast and enjoying the distinction of being the first people to alight on Loch Lomond—an event which occasioned much gratification and admiration on the part of an old shepherd and his wife who gave us shelter from the storm which broke almost as soon as we had moored the machine.



[*Aerofilms.*

THE RIBBON-LIKE HIGH STREET OF A MIDLAND TOWN.

Incidentally, my husband has since proved the value of the seaplane for more extended touring. He has flown from London to Berlin and back, while another trip of his, which shows how useful are these craft, included landing on the Thames, just by the Embankment, to keep a luncheon engagement at the Savoy.

One thing which especially appeals to me as a seaplane passenger is that one is not just a passive looker-on but must assist in

various ways. When the machine lands, it is necessary to give help with the anchor and mooring-ropes; before taking-off, one has to look after the switches while the pilot climbs out on to one of the floats to start up the engine.

Once under way, the mooring-tackle must be stowed away, a job which, in a seaplane such as we used, with side-by-side seating—the ideal type, by-the-way—calls for considerable deftness if the pilot is not to be inconvenienced and his temper ruffled. But in the later type of machine the cockpit is more roomy, which makes things easier.

I remember one occasion when I received a violent dig in the ribs and heard vaguely something about jammed controls. I started tugging at the ropes and the anchor, thinking they might have slipped, but eventually I discovered that the starting-handle, which is carried in the cockpit, after starting up the engine had become displaced and had locked the pilot's control-stick. All of which goes to show that the seaplane passenger has no time for slumbering or day-dreaming or getting bored, but must keep very much alive all the time.

This does not mean, however, that the passenger has no time for enjoying the wonderful views which pass beneath. There is ample opportunity for admiring the scenery, and very wonderful even familiar places become when seen from the air. Landscapes you think you know through and through look quite different, while even sights which are not attractive from below—factory areas and so on—seem to have fascination when looked at from above.

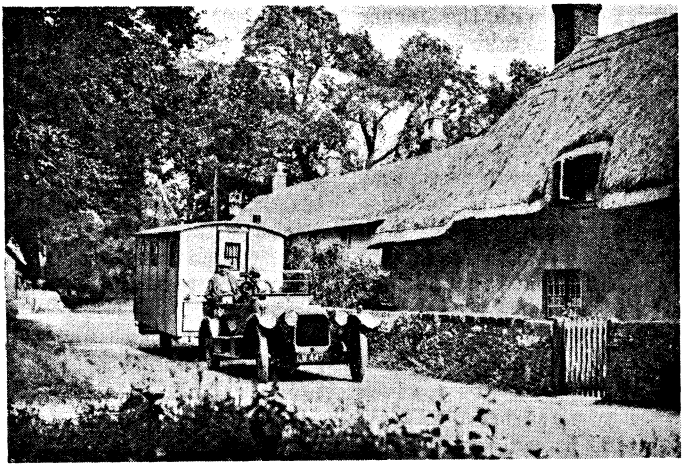
Perhaps the most marvellous thing of all is that one can get right away from civilisation if one feels inclined. One can take fishing-tackle and a few provisions, so as to make sure of food, and one can rely on motor garages for the rest. A fortnight can be spent in the open this way, moving from place to place, unfettered by roads and time-tables, seeing fresh beauties every day.

There is beauty everywhere in Britain, and there is no better or brighter way to see it than by 'plane.

A TREE.

THERE is a tree I know growing near the sea,
All crooked with wind and rain.
Even in summer it has so few leaves to hold,
And those are born in pain.
There is something bewildered in this tree's scarred body.
I think it must be wondering,
As it leans on the rough wind and storm clouds gather
Over its head, by what blundering
It came to be quickened in this hard cold rock.
I think it sorrows most of all
Because it has so little strength left to give
To its children the leaves. When they fall,
All shrunken and unbeautiful, from its arms,
I think it watches while they are blown
Frail and helpless into the sea, and I have heard
A sound that was not wind alone.

CHARLOTTE ARTHUR.



[*Topical.*

WITH A FLATAVAN IN DORSET.

THE CARAVAN HOLIDAY

By S. L. BENSUSAN

THERE is in the most of us something of the gipsy; when the spring comes we remember the opening lines of Chaucer's *Canterbury Pilgrimage*, and we think of the open road and the land of the heart's desire. This varies according to our taste, temperament and upbringing; there are some of us who look to "foreign strands," but still more remember England's native loveliness. We recall the countless places we have passed so regretfully in railway train or motor-car; we realise with a thrill of pleasure that it is necessary to pass them no longer. We can penetrate to the innermost realm of beauty, pitch our tent there, so to speak, commune with Nature in the aspect that has pleased us most. Scottish Highlands, Lake District, Peak country, moorlands of Yorkshire, beauty spots of Surrey or Hampshire, gorse-lit fairyland of Wales, choice corners of Dorset or Devon—their name is legion and all are within our reach—if we have a caravan on a motor chassis or a trailer at the back of a reliable car.

It follows that "vanning" becomes increasingly popular, and there are experts who have mastered all there is to know about the pastime. But there must be more who, like the writer, have been compelled to learn as they go along, and a still larger number who, while they propose to travel the road in the near future, would find some of the fruits of experience quite refreshing. These are the folk the writer has in mind; they intend to try their luck and they know nothing more about the equipment and management than they can gather from advertisements and booklets that, to put the matter mildly, are prepared by optimists. To tell the truth, there is no perfect holiday to be won from external associations, but with some pains and a little good fortune caravanning may provide as good a change as any other form of travel and adventure. When we are old enough,

we know that holidays, like all life's good things, come from within and not from without.

The van on the motor chassis is so completely a holiday vehicle that its appeal must be limited to those who elect to hire it, or the minority who can afford to keep one for their pleasure trips and leave it in garage for the rest of the year. For a very large proportion of folk who seek the highway it will be better to have a towing bracket fitted to the back of the car and to place the towing arm of a trailer in its keeping. A country blacksmith, working under skilful direction, fitted me an excellent bracket for a couple of pounds, and completed the job in twenty-four hours. There is one great advantage about these brackets. A reckless driver charging your car from behind when it is stationary, will leave you literally unmoved when he goes to consult the nearest garage about the state of his radiator. The resultant sense of security is definitely pleasant in these days when unskilled drivers are so numerous.

The next point to consider is the weight of your trailer. Remember that the modern motor-car is not built to draw heavy burdens, and, even if the trailer be within its compass, you are safe to be about one speed down. Where the car would go on top you will find the trailer compels you to go into third, and where the car would want the third the trailer will demand the second, and where the second would suffice the first or lowest will be called for. I am numbering top speed as four and allowing for four gears; if this be technically inexact, motorists will at least understand what is meant. Should the trailer be too heavy and the car prove unable to pull her uphill, a mechanical sprag can be let down from the driver's seat, and one of those who leave the car to lighten the load can put a special wedge under the wheels of the trailer to act as a further brake. In this way you may avoid danger even if you cannot ensure progress, while you wait until a lorry or a motor van comes along and you produce the cord that is part of the equipment of the wise, and are pulled up the hill. To avoid this unpleasant experience, often to be met or observed in the steeper parts of the country, it is well to plan a tour carefully and to get a route map showing the gradients. Anything higher than one in ten demands a car that does not take the trailer too seriously.

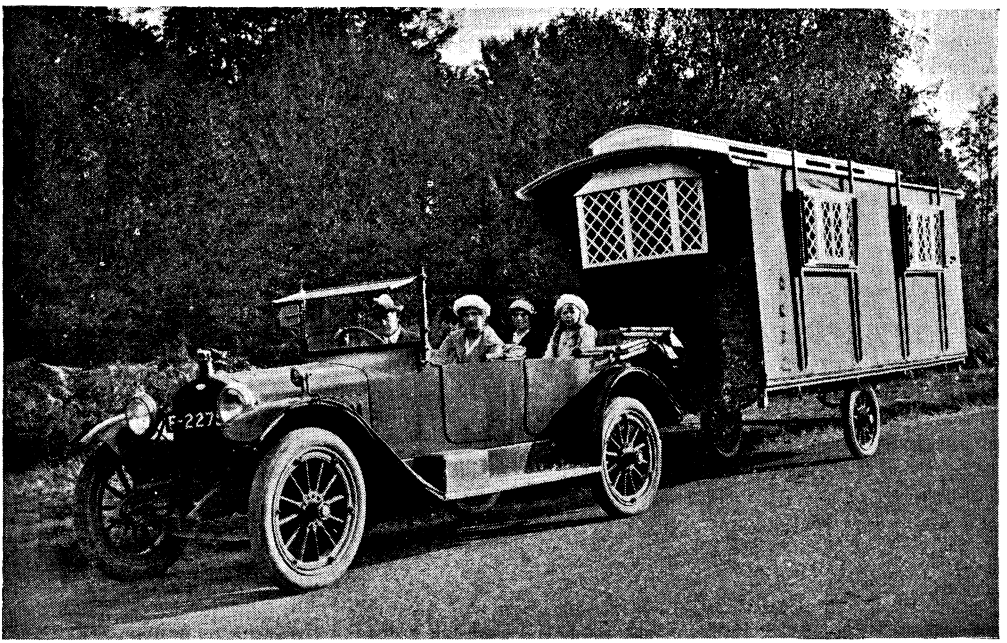
It may be objected that the most interesting parts of the country are ruled out of the programme of those whose car is not heavy or at least high-powered, but this is not so. My own little party of three has toured all England and Wales, even the mountainous districts of the Principality, with a 10–15 H.P. high-grade machine. All that became necessary was to pitch the caravan in a valley and have the car to seek the hills unburdened. From a few well-chosen centres in Wales it is possible to visit the mountainous country of Cardigan, Merioneth, Montgomery and Denbighshire and enjoy their arresting, alluring beauties to the full. A large-scale map will serve to show the most desirable centre, and in purely rural districts, no matter where, the honesty of the country people is amazing. After travelling over eight thousand miles with trailer and lean-to, leaving both, day after day, from early morning to late evening, there is but one loss to record—the theft of a chicken by a prowling cat. It had managed to open the little safe and had left nothing more than a collection of bones, carefully arranged, as though to show how hunger had prevailed over sound principles. Often little groups of village children have gathered round to criticise or admire, but they have given us no trouble. Either we have only camped near villages of outstanding rectitude, or the young are very well trained in the way they should go. Like their elders, they have shown themselves interested and friendly.

The choice of a centre for touring is to be commended; it is a mistake to seek a fresh pitch day by day. Good ones—that is, those that provide a space of level ground, shelter from high winds, some privacy, and access to water—are not found readily; when discovered they should be retained until every corner in the neighbourhood that holds interest or beauty has been explored. Experience goes to show that the pitching of a camp never takes less than two hours, while breaking a camp takes three. To cut five hours out of even the longest day is foolish, and should the weather be difficult the moving brings so many troubles in its train that faint hearts begin to murmur. It is easy to understand why Moses found his nerves so badly tried in the wilderness; even experienced vanners are heard to say things better left unsaid. But if you must strike and pitch camp very frequently, be sure that the work is never done on an empty stomach. The greater part of the inevitable annoyance yields to a good, sus-

taining meal. Some people dismantle the caravan as soon as they are up, pack the beds and turn the interior into a living-room. This is a great waste of time and labour. It is better to keep the caravan as a bedroom and a store cupboard and to have a couple of lean-tos, one on either side of the van, which provides each with a wall. The lean-tos serve many purposes. By night one or both can serve for bedroom, by day one can be a dining-room or kitchen and the other a workshop. There is shelter from rain or wind, provided the lean-to will open at either end, and there is plenty of fresh air. Cooking becomes easily possible, while the caravan itself is only used for sleeping, and for carrying carefully balanced burdens when on the road. This balance makes all the difference between easy and difficult going. Those who keep the bulk of heavy packages in the car are wisest; those who trust the trailer risk the bad balance that makes for uneasy going, while they are putting a strain on the car itself that may lead to a broken axle—*experte credo.*

Whether buying or hiring, choose the lightest trailer on the market, so long as it is strong and well sprung. One could name trailers that will sleep four people and are lighter than others that only hold two. Have graceful lines if, as is extremely unlikely, you can get them, but don't sacrifice lightness to looks, if you propose to cover much ground. You pay in security, petrol, and oil, to say nothing of wear and tear.

It is quite easy to hire a trailer at any time of the year, save the full holiday season, and when the summer is over disappointed vanners are ready to sell at a very reasonable price. Before buying, consider the cost of garage and upkeep, think of the deterioration, remember that you may not want to go in a caravan year after year, and that there are always improvements on the way. I suggest that he is wisest who hires the other man's caravan and sees that the insurance is complete. He pays his money, and his responsibilities end when the trailer goes back to its owner. In this way, if the wish to trail should persist, he can test the advantages and disadvantages of a new type every year, until at last he finds the ideal, or wears his pastime out. Those who hasten to sell every autumn are those who hasten to buy every spring. Once your towing bracket is on, you are prepared for every trailer, and if you take holiday in early summer or late autumn the price of hiring is likely to be low. From mid-July to mid-September you must pay, and rightly,



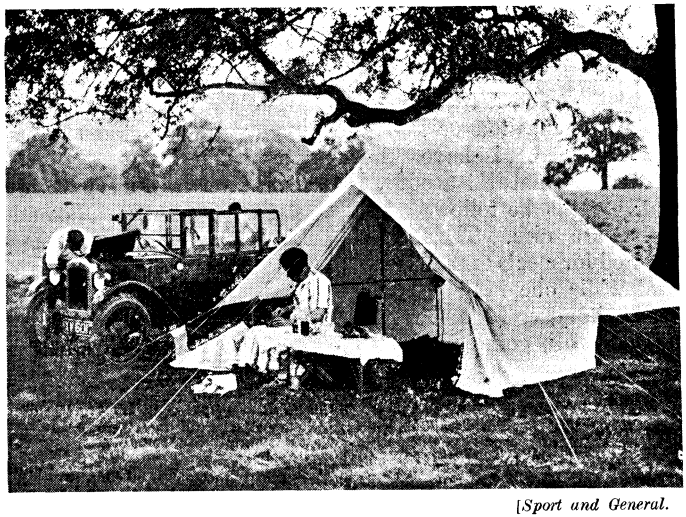
[*Central Press.*

ON THE ROAD.

for the demand exceeds the supply, and if you can choose your holiday and you select the moment when all the world is at play, you show a lack of discretion very properly to be penalised. The best month for trailing is June. April and May are apt to be cold, July brings insects, August is often very wet, September finds the wasps taking the countryside in charge. From mid-May to mid-July you have the best of late spring and early summer, the longest days, shortest nights and most reasonable prices for dairy produce and vegetables. Then, too, the owners of desirable sites are not tired of visitors, some of whom have not learned to respect the amenities of a camping-ground.

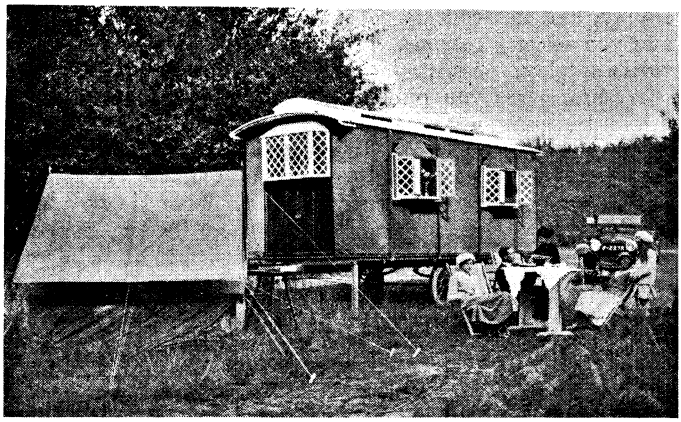
Equipment varies with the requirements of a party, but it cannot be too simple. At the same time, see to it that the beds have a good mattress, a warm blanket, a light fleecy rug and an eiderdown; it is often cold in the caravan. Remember that one and all must take a hand, that the beauty of a holiday is not revealed at the table, and that, after a time, washing up becomes an almost undesirable pastime. A good stove is a great desideratum; we use one that burns petrol vapour, and have it overhauled every year. An oven that folds flat when not in use is part of the camp equipment; so, too, are thermos flasks, each holding a quart. A large, light kettle is on constant duty. Get the best and largest kettle available: with the solitary exception of sunshine, the vanner has no better friend. The washing of plates and dishes can be entrusted to each member of the party in turn. This is not only salutary in so far as it divides responsibility, but it makes for simple living. You do not dirty knives, forks, spoons, plates, cups, saucers or dishes for the mere joy of washing them, while, since cupboard space is strictly limited and packing up is necessary, no meal is held to be finished until everything is cleared up and the débris cleared away. To this end, a pit is dug near by whenever camp is pitched, and it receives all the jars, bones, vegetable parings, waste paper and the rubbish that always collects. This tidiness is necessary for many reasons. In the first place, it is an act of essential courtesy to those on whose land you pitch your caravan; secondly, if you leave scraps lying about vermin are attracted at once. In the summer, rats have left the barns and outbuildings of farmhouses for the hedgerows; they have a very keen sense of smell and, where food is left lying about, they will be drawn to it in a very little while. Mice are seldom met in the open, but rats are all too plentiful in the countryside. By the way, keep good plate and cutlery; it is a mistake to think that anything cheap will do; you have to live with your table appointments day by day.

The choice of food presents few difficulties, because with the car in readiness it is always easy to run into the nearest town and get fresh meat and fish and the rest, while, if you have a pitch near a farm, the housewife will gladly sell eggs, butter and chickens, provided you approach her in the right way. At the same time, it is always well to have a small stock of things in tins or glass in case of emergency; such emergency may take the form of a visit from friends who have heard you are in the neighbourhood. Then the cook on duty, and every member of the party should touch the fringe of the art at least, will be called upon to excel himself or herself. It is surprising what well-selected canned things will do to promote harmony, enforce congratulations and cause the inner man to glow. Nowadays the range is so vast and the method so excellent, that the old fears of "something out of a



[*Sport and General.*

AN EASILY PORTABLE TENT.



TEA-TIME. [*Central Press.*

tin," fears to which the writer was long a victim, may be dismissed.

The question of baths is all-important, and the portable rubber variety is to be desired. With a friendly kettle capable of yielding its gallon or more, much may be accomplished. I have known sites that provided a natural arbour, in which water bath might be followed by sun bath, but these are rare. The lean-to that is not wanted for meals or work serves as bathroom, and while one bath is being enjoyed, that patient and enduring servant the kettle is, so to speak, going through the fire for its next client's sake. Waterproof groundsheets are part of the equipment of each lean-to; to sleep on a low bed on damp ground without the protecting rubber is to invite trouble. Sometimes a friendly landowner recognises the hardships of the vanner's case; it may be there is a town with public baths within motoring distance — cleanliness can be achieved, even though there are difficulties in the way.

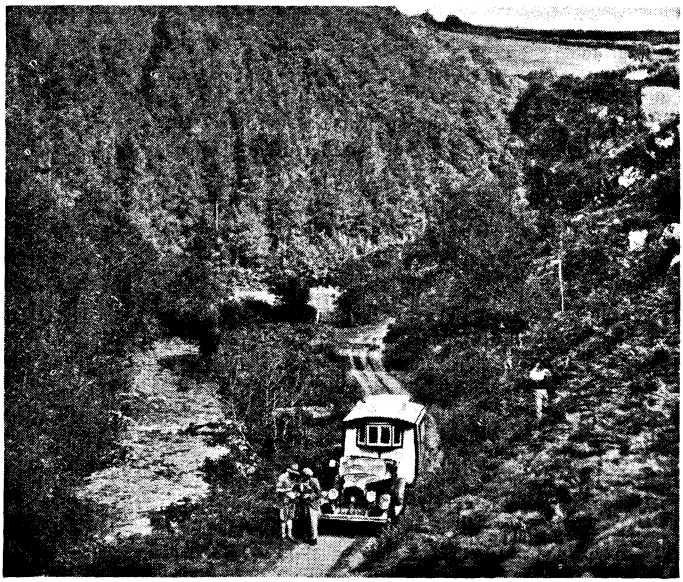
In order that the burdens—they are real and many—may not press too heavily upon one of the party, it is well to tabulate and divide them. A man will seldom be allowed to make his own bed, even though he can claim some experience, but he is a carrying animal by nature, and may fetch water. Never choose a pitch that is far from water, unless it is on a farm where you can arrange, for a consideration, to have the water-cart filled two or three times a week and brought to your van. As a rule water must be carted in cans or pails; if the latter be employed, a hoop is very useful. You place it between the handles of both pails, step over it and walk with the hoop round you, taking part of the weight of each pail. Until you have fetched water for washing, cooking and household purposes, you will not realise the measure of the daily needs. For the early morning cup of tea and for all emergencies thermos flasks are invaluable; they shorten the period of waiting, and should always be in commission, while for those who suffer from gout or rheumatism a small portable water-softening plant is to be recommended. The cost is trifling, about thirty shillings, and it can keep the camp supplied with water from which all that makes for hardness has been removed. Nobody who has used one regularly is likely to forget it when the question of camp equipment is raised. Soft water aids cooking and washing, while it keeps kettles and saucepans clean.

In choosing a site, look for a piece of



[*Topical.*

A TYPE OF MOTOR CARAVAN THAT CAN BE ERECTED OR TAKEN FROM THE CHASSIS IN FIVE MINUTES.



[*The Holiday Caravan Co., Ltd., Oxford.*

ON A PRETTY BY-ROAD.

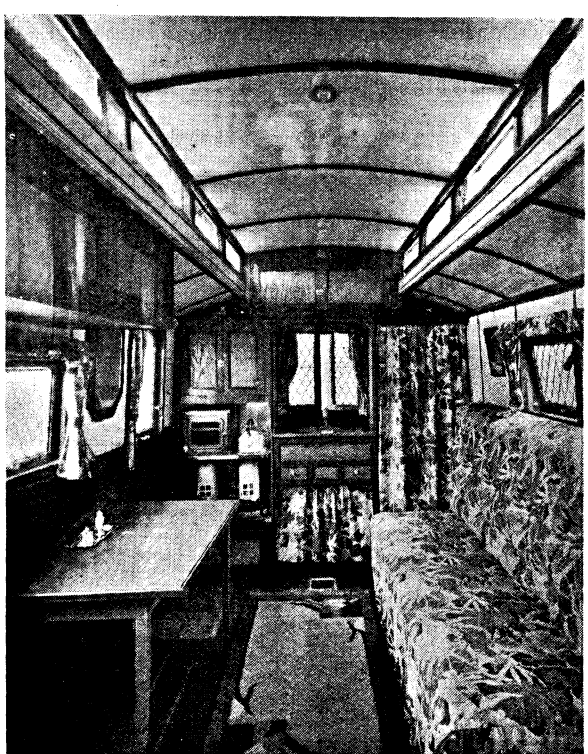
A halt to consult the map.

level ground, sufficiently high to avoid flooding in the event of heavy rains. You will wish to sleep with door open and side of lean-to drawn back, so see to it that these are not overlooked from road or house, and that they do not face the east or north wind. See, too, that the lean-to pegs are very securely fixed, and loosen the ropes at the first sign of rain. Taut canvas may fail to realise hopes; slackened it will keep the wet out. Rig up some waterproof protection that will save the caravan from the rain should it come from an unexpected quarter, and have something in the nature of a porch, so that in passing from canvas to lean-to it is possible to keep dry. Remember that there are not, and cannot be, facilities for drying clothes.

Don't leave any work undone at bedtime. Wake up every morning to a place in order; the psychological effect is greater than people think. My own experience shows that if there is much work on hand the desirable timetable is as follows (I am using summer time).

6.30 a.m., cup of tea. 7 a.m., sharp morning walk. 7.45 to 8 a.m., or thereabout, prepare breakfast; 8.30, breakfast. By this time beds are made, and the bed in the lean-to is packed up. 9.30, breakfast over, have everything cleared and washed, place tidy, lunch packed. 9.30 to 6.30, out, if weather permits, for lunch, tea and work in open air. 7.30, dinner. 8.30, music. 10 to 10.30, cup of tea and bed.

For music we carry a portable gramophone and some really satisfactory records. We chance to prefer music to jazz and selections from musical comedies, so the great composers and the great interpreters give us of their best. A good portable wireless might serve, but the fully equipped sets seem still



[*Bertram Hutchings Caravans, Ltd., Winchester.*

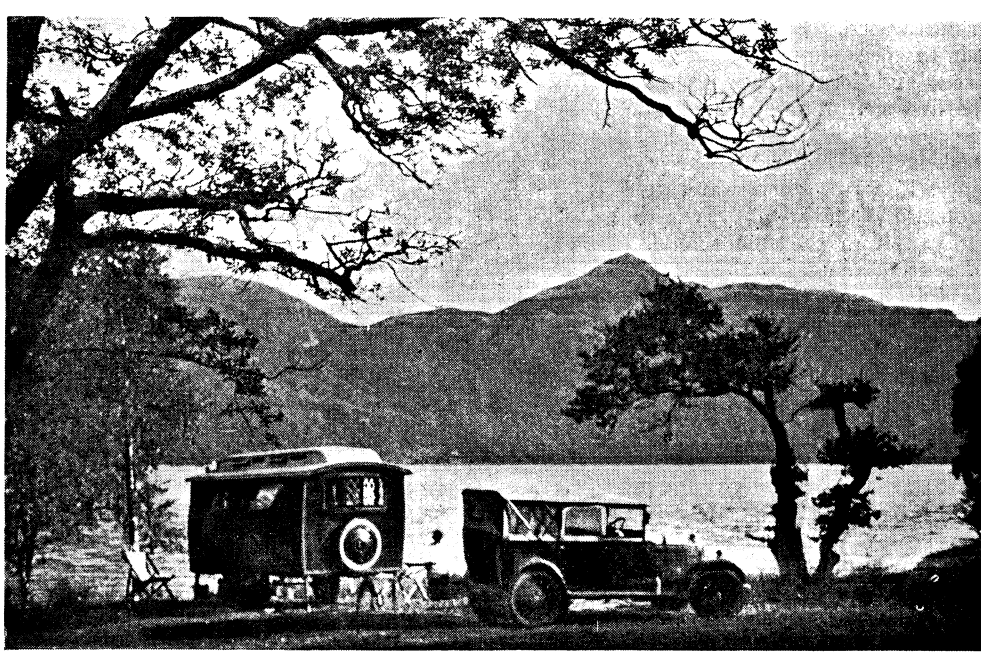
A 12-FOOT "VOYAGEUR" DE-LUXE TRAILER CARAVAN.

too dear and the others are not attractive. Music is a wonderful finish to a day in the open air, particularly if it should have been a strenuous or difficult one. A curious fact, and one worth noting, is that the birds rouse themselves to listen and to imitate or emulate. In Carmarthenshire last spring, in a meadow by the banks of the Towy, a blackcap came into an oak tree to listen and started his own song, a blackbird did the same, and there were others, a robin among them, who attended our concerts and offered one of their own, which was gratefully received.

When leaving a pitch make a point of seeing that the ground is as clear and, if possible, as clean as it was when you arrived. Let there be nothing save acts of courtesy and kindness to remind the man who lent the ground that he had visitors. In this way the path is clear for new-comers, and the good repute of vanners is maintained.

I have covered the ground briefly, telling something of the difficulties and responsibilities; of the pleasures there is but little space left to speak. They are very many and varied. In the first place, the vanners' day provides the most complete and independent holiday imaginable, for the work soon becomes part of the game and is matter for laughter rather than complaint. Then the open-air life, if the weather be only tolerably good, has an immediate effect upon physical and mental health. Ailments tend to go, lost sleep comes back, with the return to what in truth is natural living. It is a great relief to escape from service, to live by one's own exertions for once, feeling free and independent of all the ties that we must acknowledge in daily life. There are no restrictions other than those we elect to impose upon ourselves; the outer world passes; even the post can be left behind. We have the essentials and they suffice us; we have discovered the way of living that enables us to cast off the shackles that convention has employed for our reduction to the ranks of those who live by rule or order. All the world's beauty spots are within our reach.

I have not touched the question of cost; it must vary with individual requirements. But six months on the road in two successive years cost, for three people, with hired trailer and our own car, just three hundred and fifty pounds, say two pounds a day all told. Within the range of our simple requirements we had the best of everything, and the price includes several additions to the car—a new carburettor, new accumulators, new back axle and a large and comprehensive overhaul. We returned to normal surroundings and ways of life in the best of health and spirits, making plans for a year to come, when the road will call again.



[*The Holiday Caravan Co. Ltd., Oxford.*

A LAKESIDE PITCH.



"They stood in the middle of London Bridge, as if in the middle of the Sahara Desert. Neither answered the other's question."

PEGAWAY PETER

By ANDRUE BERDING

ILLUSTRATED BY LINDSAY CABLE

THE string of eleven white-clad four-milers pounded out a laborious semicircle in the last lap of the seventh event in the amateur meet at Wembley. Eleven panting breasts heaved forward for the final effort; as many pairs of aching, automatic legs flung as many bodies toward the finishing tape. Two more rounds of the quarter-mile track and the gruelling four-mile would be over.

As the leading runner, a short, squatty, red-haired youth who looked more like a weight-lifter than a runner, despite the eager leaping of his effective legs, ran past the official who held out a pasteboard figure to indicate the number of laps, the crowd of well over 30,000 bawled its encouragement. The second man, too, a slim, dark-haired youth who ran with his mouth open as if yawning, drew his meed of applause. Then the turmoil of the throng grew less with each succeeding runner. . . .

But as the last man drew near that fatal line the crowd grew wild with shouting. Hundreds bellowed out a kind of mocking encouragement such as you've probably never heard before except at an American baseball game.

"Buck up, Pegaway!" "Pegaway Peter!" "Ten more miles, you Pega-

way!" It was Pegaway this and Pegaway Peter that. Their mouths were great with laughter.

The last runner thus addressed by a myriad voices crunched past the official with a semi-grin on his face. He ran with a peculiar style, this tall, lanky, well-built, almost handsome chap who seemed so intimately known to everyone of that immense gathering. With left shoulder farther afield than the right, as if to serve as a rudder such as the first type of aeroplanes employed, and head cocked a little to the same side, he ran easily and well, though with comparatively little speed. His long legs reached out and pulled in distance, but they were so long and he moved them so slowly that he seemed to be doing little more than walking fast. There was no flash to his legs as there was to the short, speeding nether limbs of the runners ahead of him. To make matters much worse, his arms apparently knew nothing of the old orthodox system of holding themselves cocked at his side, elbows bent and wrists straight, or the new British system of a circular motion with both arms rotating in front of the chest. Instead, they just flapped, and there is no other way of describing them than just by saying they flapped.

When the runners reached the last lap, the great crowd shouted again as before. There were more cheers for the last man than for the first, but they were of entirely a different tenor. Again the wags bellowed their favourites: "Move your legs, Pegaway!" "There's still a chance—you're only a mile behind!" "Go it, Pegaway. I've bet on you." That anyone had bet on Pegaway Peter was the greatest witticism of all.

The tall, springy chap grinned once again. He had come to expect this litany of rude remarks. All their shouts, which might have stirred the dead to life, did not add an inch to his rhythmical slow motion.

Half-way round the last lap, in front of the holders of the cheaper seats, the first runner—by this time the man who had been second—passed Pegaway so easily that the tall one might be said to have been standing still and placed himself one full lap ahead. The crowd became half-crazy with their shouting and with throwing of programmes into the air to descend in a veritable snowstorm.

One after the other, the runners crossed the finishing line, the tall red-haired athlete again first. At last Pegaway came trundling down the final straightaway. A group of wits in the 3*s*. 6*d*. seats kept time with each of his steps by imitating the sound of a heavy locomotive starting up—"Chug! Chug! Chug! Chug! Chug!" Just before the finish they whistled. And at the finish, as if by prearranged concert, that tremendous throng groaned deeply. Pegaway Peter had come in last for the twenty-seventh consecutive time!

I SUPPOSE every large office in the city has its hero, its heroine and its scapegoat. I don't know for certain whom to choose for the first two honours in the office of which I am manager; but there is no doubting who was the scapegoat. It was Pegaway Peter!

His last name was Osborne; his father was a respectable manager of an insurance office in Cannon Street. But I was the only one in our office who used his surname, since I wrote out his bi-monthly cheques. The other members of the office staff, from a quartette of concentrated impudence otherwise known as office-boys, to my own assistant, made good use of his two graphic names and did not relish a third.

If the ridicule, contemptuous or good-natured, of 30,000 or 40,000 people could bring only the inevitable fifty per cent grin to Pegaway Peter's face, the sly insistent banter of the office had little more effect. He took it all with his quiet smile, which made my people try all the harder to get under his skin.

I remember, when Peter first came to us, he was a good dependable clerk, probably sent by his father to this Acme Insurance Company office, where I occupied identically the same position as Osborne senior, esquire, to learn the business. His fellow-clerks, the stenographers and even the office-boys were duly respectful. Then somehow or other the news of what prodigy we had in our midst leaked out. How, I don't know. I believe a reporter came to the office to interview him. At any rate, it was the beginning of the end.

Peter, you see, had got it into his head that he needed exercise, and that the four-mile was an agreeable means of getting it. He had never done much running, but with the eager impetuosity of youth he reached out for probably the most strenuous type of sports there is. He never ran to win, but to exercise, and from the very first he began to finish last. His peculiarly indi-

vidual style and his peculiarly individual finishing position soon made him a figure in the sporting public's eye. His picture got into the papers and his name into the paragraphers' columns. Someone hinged "Pegaway" to the rest of his name and there he was before the footlights, as well known to England as Charley Chaplin or Mussolini.

I often wondered why the managers of these athletic contests did not order Peter off the track. Rather, they encouraged him, probably feeling justified by the entertainment he gave the spectators. And the four-milers themselves liked him, well knowing that with Pegaway Peter in the race none of them could possibly come in last. For he regulated his pace, not according to the leader, but according to the man just ahead of him.

And he cared little for the jeers of the crowd. He ran his four miles, got his maximum of exercise, and he was satisfied. It was none of the spectators' business what position he finished in. Even when he turned up by mistake one Saturday afternoon at the Junior Amateur Athletic championship and finished last in a race of youngsters, to the unbounded merriment and sarcasm of the press, he did not seem to mind.

The office force, however, did. When they learned, at first incredulously, of his ridiculous penchant, the halo of respect they had been building around him crashed like an eggshell. They became as merciless as the crowds that watched him run. Several of the clerks were steady followers of amateur athletics, as I am myself, and they reported faithfully to the office his each successive exploit. The lanky youth furnished an outlet for the office's pent-up wit.

The aged, war-worn postman who hobbled in with the morning letters became known behind his dismal back as Pegaway senior. An office-boy who took two hours one afternoon to get to an address only four streets away, merely because he had mistaken his destination, acquired to his equally dismal face the title of Pegaway junior, or Peg for short. One of the clerks possessed a toy that displayed five horses racing on a small track. One of them, because it was out of order, always chortled in last. Harvey Adams conceived the idea of giving this toy to Peter for Christmas, after carefully painting on the unfortunate animal the name Pegaway. All which was done with an elaborate ceremony the afternoon of the day before Christmas, Mr. Mills, the accountant, taking it upon himself to make a presentation speech.

For a time I was seriously worried over this situation, fearing its effect on the working morale of the office. There was too much chattering, too much idle searching for unhackneyed witticism when their brains should have been centred in their ledgers, too much levity altogether, to suit me. I really debated with myself whether it would not be best to let Peter go. But when I saw how earnestly he kept at his work, and how little the ridicule of others affected him, however much it may have affected them, I could not find it in my heart to make him pay an unjust penalty.

THE girls in the office, as I have frequently found to be the case, were more cruel and bitter in their derision of Peter than the men. They went deliberately out of their way, miles, or four miles, out of their way, to insult him, without having the fear the men had that this six feet two inches of tolerance might strike back devastatingly.

Perhaps they had a reason for their cruelty, as such reasons go. For when Peter first came into my office he had eyes for only one of them, Nancy Howells, and she undeniably the prettiest of them all. Peter himself was handsome enough to cause a little softness to come into the eyes of girls, and they did not relish his concentration of interest. Nancy frankly liked him. They had gone out several times, and I can tell you they made a fine sight together, one that caused even a hard-shell old bachelor like me to repent. It was glorious to see them walking down Cannon Street, as they often did, of a lunch-hour, to the centre of London Bridge, from which to watch the bulging traffic of the Thames.

Indeed, I had high hopes and low fears of an office romance, hopes because of what I read in their eyes, and fears because such a romance invariably brings with it a temporary breakdown of office efficiency, and perhaps the loss of a member of my personnel just at a time when his or her experience is becoming of value. Nancy, I know, attended a week-end party at Peter's father's house, given by his sister Evelyn. There were theatres and dinners. There were those long walks in the early afternoon. The gossip-mongers of the office were busily

at work, and the office-boys had got up a sweepstake as to when it would be.

It all faded when his aura of respectability dissolved. The great wave of ridicule that descended on Peter swept Nancy, stunned and half drowned, away from him. To do her justice, she clung to him stoutly for a while. She refused to believe that Peter had become Pegaway. She indignantly defended him, made denials and defences for him which he had no intention of making for himself. It was not until young, irrepressible Harry Davidson took her to Richmond Park, where she saw for herself his enormous degradation, that she faltered. Davidson told me she insisted on leaving the Park immediately after the four-mile, her face as white as her teeth. The weight of 25,000 people beating their brains to find some missile of sarcasm to throw at her hero was too much for her.

To do her yet more justice, she tried earnestly to induce him to give up his insane efforts at running, and even to leave the office and take a different position elsewhere. But Peter was an obstinate animal, if ever there was one. He never could have kept at the four-mile if he weren't. The ridicule merely stung him into a fervent resolve to carry on.

The united sarcasm of the office overcame Nancy's last stages of reluctance. When she found herself included in Peter's hailstorm of derision she at first fought back savagely, but after much beating by that hailstorm she retreated to shelter. When he asked her for the next date she refused.

They were walking down King William Street at the time, just having passed the Mansion House, following lunch. Vaguely ahead of them they could see the Monument, whose great fluted Doric column flung its several hundred feet into a leaden sky. Somewhere behind it was London Bridge.

"I won't go out with you again, Peter," Nancy repeated firmly, looking straight ahead, "until you give up this foolish running."

"But, Nancy," he parried, his reasonably fine face grave and hurt, "a chap must have exercise."

"Oh, Peter!" she exclaimed, "there are hundreds of ways of getting exercise. Why must you choose the one which makes you appear foolish?"

"It's nobody's business——" abruptly.

"It's mine," she retorted. "If I'm going out with you I don't want everyone staring at us and snickering."

"Then you don't want to go out with me?" Peter demanded.

"Then you don't want to give up this running for me?" she quickly thrust back.

And there they stood in the middle of London Bridge, as if in the middle of the Sahara Desert. Neither answered the other's question. Beneath them a steamer from Bremen was trying to chase them off the bridge. All around them the outlandish ports of the world had sent their mechanical representatives to their feet. The flag of Argentina mingled with that of Malta, Holland with Australia, China with Mexico. They saw nothing of it all.

Perhaps Peter was merely testing her. Nancy could not be sure. Something of the idea, perhaps, that if she really loved him she would stand the derision of the world, and welcome it. But if so, it was an unfair test, and anyway, all such tests invariably result in discomfiture to their ingenious creators.

FROM that afternoon on, Peter and Nancy were divorced, so to speak. Nancy backed out from under the ridicule, and Peter simply shrugged his shoulders at it. But he was greatly hurt, as I could see. And I didn't like it in the least, for from that luncheon-hour on his work declined. Something of the stubborn old force and the calm efficiency seemed to have left him. He began to make mistakes, hitherto unknown for him. He gave an agent fifty per cent too much commission and I had a miserable time getting it back. He sent an erroneous price quotation to a prospective client, and we lost that business. And gradually a suffering look came into his eyes.

I could well see what it was. He didn't care a pen-point for the laughter of the whole office or of a whole mob. But he minded like sacrilege the coldness of Nancy. She spoke to him very little now; no more, in fact, than the office routine required. For that matter, she was none too happy either, but she contrived to keep that fact a little better hidden. It was only when I caught her glancing at him with a half-pitiful, half-puzzled look in her eyes that I knew how deeply she was hurt.

At last, after Peter had actually mixed the enclosures of two letters, and the knowledge that we were working on a certain "prospect" came into the possession of



"She insisted on leaving the Park immediately after the four-mile, her face as white as her teeth."

one of our rivals, I decided that matters had gone far enough. Either he should reform instantly or he would have to leave.

I took him out to lunch in the little Red Hen restaurant overlooking Cheapside from the second floor to tell him so. He listened gravely while over an order of turtle soup, steak and chips I reviewed his rapid succession of egregious errors within the last few days. He took my conclusion calmly enough.

"I've done the best I could for you, Peter," I said. "I've seen that you got two rises since you came with us. But you've cost us some money and much inconvenience lately. Your work has shown a sad deterioration. This can't go on. Unless you exhibit a marked improvement this next week I shall be forced to let you out the first of next month."

He looked at me full, and then lowered his eyes.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Berding," he said. "I don't know what's the matter with me."

"I do," I said decisively.

He looked up questioningly.

"It's yourself."

He looked down again.

"You've let a girl affect you disastrously. Whereas she ought to be making you happy. It's all your own fault. You know yourself what caused it all."

"Yes, I know," he said wearily.

"Then, why on God's green earth don't you give up this foolish four-mile farce?" I half shouted.

He ventured again the old excuse of exercise.

I glared at him speechless for a second. "Then in Heaven's name," I snapped, "why don't you try to get a little more exercise by running a little faster?"

He looked at me as if I had chanced upon a new discovery.

"But I don't go out to win."

"The man who doesn't go out to win loses," I sputtered. "And you're losing fast."

"But perhaps you don't understand, sir," he temporised. "To try to win in a four-mile race involves a lot of strain. It ceases to become exercise. There wouldn't be the joy in it for me there really is now. Believe me or not, I get a lot of enjoyment pounding round those sixteen laps. If I tried to win once I'd have to try all the time. If I actually won once, I never could keep on running last again. It's a great strain on the heart."

"It strikes me that matters as they stand now are a great strain on your heart," I shot back, "or at any rate on your brain."

He half shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't believe you could win if you had to," I stung him. "I just don't believe you've got the spirit."

A little glow appeared in his eyes.

"You haven't the physical pluck to run fast," I taunted; "and any man who lets a girl like Nancy go out of his life hasn't any moral pluck. You haven't any pluck of any kind."

I hurt him, as I had intended to. He stared at me, a red flush on his cheeks. Next to us a middle-aged spinster was staring curiously—but I had ceased to care.

"I could run much faster if it were a case of life and death," Peter defended.

"Yes," I struck back savagely, with a bitterness I had not known myself possess before, "if it were a case of saving your own hide you could run fast. But when it's a case of giving up your confounded stubbornness, making people respect you instead of laughing at you, and of winning the love of the most attractive girl I've ever met, you just don't care to exert yourself. Harry Davidson is making good use of your imbecility to improve his chances with Nancy."

I hadn't intended to bring out this last, fearing to stir up dissension in the office. But out it came; it was true; I had worked myself up to quite a heat; and I let it stand.

Peter said nothing. His lips were compressed, and his eyes hard. I thought I had gone far enough. I repeated my decision to sack him on the first if he did not improve, and we returned to the office.

THE Amateur Athletic Association was to hold its annual championship sports at the Stamford Bridge grounds the next Saturday afternoon. This year the championship sports were of great importance, since they would serve as a basis for the selection of the British Olympic team. Pegaway Peter had entered, as usual. If I had not read it in the newspapers myself I should have learned of it in a hundred different ways that week. It furnished the office with an overflowing source of stale wit and humour. They prodded Peter as they had never prodded him before.

"Thinking of going to the Olympics, Pegaway?" "You'll be a world champion soon." "We've chartered a special train to come down to see you run."

In fact, this last was more or less true. The entire office force, for some perverse reason or other, had declared their intention of journeying down to Stamford Bridge to see the sports. I was going; we all, except old Mr. Hennepin, who remained in the office on Saturday afternoons to receive the reports of agents, would join ourselves to the thousands of other spectators. Even Nancy was going, and this to Peter was evidence that all was at an end for him, since hitherto Nancy had steadfastly refused to witness his humiliation, following that initial memorable occasion.

Peter lived near me at Streatham Hill, and I met him on the Underground Saturday morning. We said nothing at all on that journey, for I am constitutionally disinclined to talk early in the morning. But when the cold air struck us as we emerged from the Cannon Street station I felt inspired to speak.

"I suppose you'll make a fool of yourself as usual this afternoon," I commented.

"I'll get a little exercise," he said doggedly.

"You know Nancy will be there, don't you?"

Out of the corner of my eye I saw him nod.

"Doesn't that mean anything to you?" I queried.

"Everything in the world," he gritted.

At the front door of the office a sudden inspiration came to me.

"I'll bet you ten pounds you won't come in among the first"—better encourage him as much as possible—"among the first seven."

He looked a little surprised. But he shook his head. "I'd prefer not to bet."

I said nothing, but stepped through the doorway ahead of him.

Peter had my permission to leave at noon, although the office did not close officially until one o'clock. His departure was a lamentable affair. Everyone suddenly stopped work. As he approached the door someone whispered a loud "Chug! Chug!" Another whistled, another groaned. The door opened and slammed, and everyone wore a wide grin, except Nancy, who was working at her books.

THE official count of the crowd that afternoon at Stamford Bridge was 55,000. Their enthusiasm was tremendous, for the standard of the sports was superbly high. Athletes had come from Germany, France, Holland, the Dominions and America for pre-Olympic try-outs. The opening events of the afternoon, the discus throw, javelin throw, hammer throw, pentathlon and hundred-yard dash, broke three championships and one world's record.

The forty or more men and women from the Acme Insurance office sat around me like noisy chicks around a brooding hen. They were most of them sincere enthusiasts in sports and could follow the fine points of an athletic performance. But one and all they were waiting for what was to them the supreme event—the four-mile.

Nancy Howells sat in the front row of the 3*s*. 6*d*. seats, with girl-friends on either side of her, and Harry Davidson leaning down over her shoulder for snatches of conversation. I noticed Davidson pointing out something on the programme to her with great enjoyment. I automatically opened my programme to the indicated page and found to my indignation that Peter had actually been listed among the entrants merely as "Pegaway Peter." It made me quite angry.

The afternoon dragged on its way, until at last the four-mile came up for running. Sixteen runners of varied hues and running garments of even more varied colours aligned themselves at the starting-point and dug themselves a toehold. There were three Germans running, two Frenchmen, a South African, and the remainder Englishmen. Peter had drawn a position well away from the grass. Already the crowd has seized upon his presence and was making the most of it. The fact that Pegaway Peter was here for the Olympic trials threw them into veritable convulsions. The English journalists were uproariously telling their colleagues from America, Germany, Holland and France about him to make his fame or infamy international.

"Running for England, Pegaway?"
"Pegaway Peter, the human greyhound!"
"Why don't you run to Amsterdam, Pegaway?"

Always in the past that inevitable half-grin had come to Peter's face. But now there was no sign of it. The shouts of the crowd might have been addressed to another runner, for all he seemed to care. I doubt whether anyone other than I—unless it were Nancy—noticed the set expression on his face and hazarded a guess as to what it presaged.

Whatever it meant, it seemed to make no difference. The first, second, third and

fourth laps, ending the first mile, found him just barely last, following closely upon the heels of the penultimate man! It must have been humiliating to the South African, the German and the Cheltenham runners, who were struggling for first place, to feel the attention of the crowd directed to a miserable person some distance to their rear. But so public and laughable a character had Pegaway Peter become that you could scarcely blame those 55,000 sheep.

For the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth laps, Peter remained where he was. All that could be said for him was that the whole sixteen were very closely bunched, and he was not so far from the leader as one might be inclined to think. But to the crowd that meant nothing. What was so important to them was that Pegaway was once more last.

"Had a puncture, Pegaway?" "Little more steam, young fellow." "Are you swimming to Amsterdam, Pegaway?"

My office people were worse than the rest. That front row of girls put up a pandemonium loud enough for a London taxi. Only Nancy could not be made to shout. On the ninth lap I saw Peter glance furtively at our section as he struggled past. He saw the faces of all the girls lighted with wicked glee except one, which was very red. Not at any time had his own seemed so grim. The old half-grin was far away.

Truth was, he was running well. Sick though I was—literally sick—at seeing him last again, I could not help noticing this fact. It was going to be a fast race, and the fifteen runners—one had dropped out for some reason or other—were closely grouped together. Peter was within reasonable distance of the leading German. There would be no overlapping in this race.

The crowd had the unbounded joy of seeing him last for three more laps. They demanded of him vociferously why he didn't pull himself along by his own shoestrings, had he ever run after a bus, would he have some tea while running? They suggested in their gentle manner that he should not stumble over his arms and that he should hold his head up like a man.

Then suddenly something happened. The timing official had stepped out to hold up the pasteboard card which indicated this would be the last mile, when Peter abruptly left his ultimate position as if he had spurned it away with his feet. He overtook three men before the crowd knew what had happened. Then you should have heard the shouting!

"Hey, can't you count, Pegaway?" "What's the matter? Had a fit?" "Pegaway's just woke up." "That isn't good manners, Pegaway."

But Peter didn't seem to mind. He overtook another man while the crowd was still using up its first breath. They couldn't seem to understand it. In all probability he would drop back in a moment to his secure rearguard position. Indeed, the runner he had just passed made an effort to reverse their positions. But this only stirred Pegaway to further efforts, and they both went ahead of two runners in the struggle. Peter made it one more at the beginning of the fifteenth lap.

I began to perceive the end of this. The absence of his half-grin, his rigid expression, his persistent struggle, his ease in running, told me many things. Struck by a sudden inspiration, and taking a long chance, I leaned far over, craned my neck and whispered a lie in Nancy's ear:

"Peter told me he was going to run this race for you."

She gave no evidence of having heard, her eyes glued on Peter, watching him pass another runner. As the group of leaders sped in for the last lap he passed still another man and attached himself to them.

Recovered from their amazement, the crowd lifted up Peter in their shouts as if he were the only runner upon whom England could pin any hopes, although the Cheltenham man had a yard lead over the German. Half of them expected him to fall back again, and the other half wanted him to remain in the front.

"Move those long legs a little faster, Pegaway." "Hurry up there, boy, I've just put a ha'penny bet on you."

It was the last quarter, and the race opened up into a gruellingly fast finish. Five men were ahead of Peter as the lap began. But before fifty yards had been covered he had eliminated two. Only the Cheltenham man, the German and the South African were before him. They were intimately bunched, not five feet separating all three, and Peter was right on the heels of the South African—no, level with him. "Pegaway! Pegaway!" he was third.

At the half-lap Peter was level with the German and only two feet behind the Englishman, Carpenter. Running awkwardly as he always ran, but yet with ease,



"Struck by a sudden inspiration, and taking a long chance, I leaned far over, craned my neck and whispered a lie in Nancy's ear: 'Peter told me he was going to run this race for you.'"

he seemed far fresher than either of the other two. As they came down the last stretch he edged ahead of the German and drew almost level with Carpenter.

It's almost useless for me, an insurance office manager, to describe the crowd at that moment. They were all on their feet, wildly waving their hands, their programmes, even each other's hats. I saw my staid assistant, Mr. Kirkpatrick, snatch off the hat of Miss Price, one of our stenographers, and shake it in the air—poor hat! The noise was deafening. It was again Peter this and Pegaway Peter that—but now in an entirely different tone.

Here they were now, rushing toward us, pounding out the last few yards. Peter and Carpenter seemed to be even, neck and neck. But just at the finish Carpenter leaped for the tape and won by two feet.

While hell on earth seemed to break loose, Carpenter flung himself on the grass, completely played out; but Peter, smiling and seemingly at ease, trotted back past our section of the stands. I called down to him amid the turmoil:

"Brave effort, Peter. This means Amsterdam for you."

And he called back: "I took your advice, sir, to get a little more exercise."

I collapsed in my seat.

The announcer had just trumpeted forth: "Carpenter lowered the world's record for the four-mile by three seconds."

"It took a world's record to beat you, Peter," I cried again.

He smiled back, right into the eyes of Nancy Howells. There must have been something in those eyes to draw him toward her. She leaned forward and whispered in his ear.

What she whispered I don't know and do not care. For the way in which Peter dashed off the ground and that something in the smile with which Nancy turned to me were quite enough.

HILLS OF HOME.

SOME sigh for Pharaoh's fabled land
By pyramid and Nile;
Some dream of golden Samarcand,
Or lonely coral isle;
And many lays sing Devon's praise,
Or Sussex by the sea:
But Cotswold ways and Cotswold days
Are good enough for me.

I've seen the dawn come stealing low
On dim Ionian seas,
And noonday glow where blossoms blow
Of peach and almond trees;
I've seen the sunset's burning bar
On the Seven Hills of Rome:
But lovelier far is one lone star,
And quiet hills of home.

And ever I long once more to walk
The old familiar ways,
To hear again the homely talk
And homely gardens praise:
Where the Windrush winds to Burford Mills,
In the deep grass I'd lie,
And make a song of the Cotswold Hills
And the wide Cotswold sky.

H. H. M.

MR. BUFFUM STEADIES THE BUFFS

By HUGH DE SÉLINCOURT

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

IT was Mr. Buffum's fifty-second birthday, but in spite of that he felt that in many private ways a man's life was becoming too elaborate. In his young days a man rolled his socks up and hoped for the best, or at any rate that enough attention would be paid to his face to permit his sock arrangements to pass unnoticed. Nowadays no self-respecting man could appear in public without proper sock-suspenders, which were most tricky to adjust till you knew how. Niece Lucia had seen to the sock-suspenders. In the early days of their friendship she had taken him quietly on one side and very seriously but most awfully nicely (so as not to hurt his feelings) explained to him that he really must not let his socks hang in little heaps over his ankles: and had presented him with two pairs of sock-suspenders. To form a new habit, in the more intimate matters of dress, is almost more difficult than to break an old habit; but Mr. Buffum had accomplished this arduous feat to please the dear girl, tickled too and pleased that anybody should mind much, one way or the other, whether his socks bagged in rolls over his ankles or whether they didn't.

Collars were not what they were. Mr. Buffum found the two ordinary flaps to be fastened over the stud-head quite trying enough to manipulate, indeed too trying when his fingers were cold or he happened to be pressed for time. But that was nothing. That was child's play to what the modern collar demanded. It was simply a new ritual. First the flaps had to be buttoned over the stud, then the right flap must be carefully lifted, a special tab from the left flap buttoned high up on a button hidden high up under the right flap: then the whole collar must be lifted and the tie adjusted and tied: then the collar must be lowered, the head of the stud removed and two more tabs buttoned over the stud (without letting either of the two already buttoned slip off); the head of the stud replaced; with the hanging tie increasing the difficulty; and if all these delicate operations were not carried out neatly and dexterously, the collar looked like a crumpled rag round your neck.

No: life had not become easier.

There was glib talk of Dress Reform for Men, as though the reforms that were already being enacted were not, in all conscience, sufficiently drastic. What privacy was left to be invaded, when one's most intimate garments were under public discussion?

There were occasions, it must be whispered, when Mr. Buffum almost wished that he had been left alone in the seclusion of country life with his old-fashioned nightgown and his old-fashioned razor, and without the countless advantages of modern life, the motor-car, the wireless, the gramophone, jazz, dancing and sock-suspenders.

So he a little wistfully thought, as he gazed at the contents of a neat parcel which the post had brought him on the fifth of May, his birthday: braces and sock-suspenders to match, of a chaste Cambridge blue. They were a present from Niece Lucia; they were also a refinement up to which he could never hope, really properly, to live. He might, of course, when lunching, as he sometimes did, at the Romeo, remove his coat and waistcoat at the preliminary wash and brush up, and before putting them on again have his shoes cleaned: then if he gave his trousers an extra hitch, as he quite easily could, the shoe-black or an observant man or two might possibly notice that in the matter of braces and sock-suspenders he was the equal of any man living: a man, in truth, worthy to be the uncle of such a niece.

As a matter of fact he was lunching that

very day at the Romeo with Niece—a birthday lunch, with possibly a show to follow. The least he could do was to put them on. That would be very little trouble. He immediately went and did so: solely to please Niece Lucia, and not at all, naturally, like a small boy with a new toy.

Ben, he noticed, was tidying a bed near the house. Ben, he was sure, would like to see. So with his coat and waistcoat over his arm he made for the garden. Eliza and Mrs. Ben were in the hall.

"What do you think of these?" he asked, and, stooping, carefully worked up one trouser-leg; then, slightly lifting his leg, he stood up, inserting proud thumbs under his braces.

Eliza and Mrs. Ben eyed the dainty harness with judicial seriousness. Mrs. Ben managed to say "*Very* pretty" before laughter took her comfortable body. Eliza said: "Did you ever now! The things they do get up these days!" To which Mr. Buffum made answer: "Yes. Wonderful. I'm just going to show old Ben how smart I am."

Whereupon the two women retreated to the kitchen to enjoy laughter without restraint, and Mr. Buffum hurried into the garden.

He was surprised, expecting gruff comment, to hear serious considered approval from Ben, who appraised them as he might a well-planned bed: "Very nice: no mistake: very, very nice." Possibly in a past incarnation Monnie's father had been a dandy in the Regency or ruffled it in pearls and silk at the court of Queen Elizabeth. There was no knowing. Mr. Buffum was taken aback that no fun was poked at him, and Ben, sensing his surprise, remarked like a sage:

"If you are goin' to wear things, there ain't no sense in not havin' 'em so-so."

An early start forbade the possibility of probing more closely into the surprisingness of Ben's attitude. Mr. Buffum merely uttered a ruminative "Yes"; but he made a mental note that he would mention the matter to Niece Lucia at lunch, as it offered additional proof for his favourite idea that old Ben was a great gentleman disguised as a working man.

During the whole drive to London his mind brooded on the mysterious strands that, intricately woven from the past, go to the making of a human character, pleasantly aware as he brooded how the trivial absurdity of braces and sock-suspenders had lured him, like a will-o'-the-wisp, far out of his mental depth. He anticipated a delightful talk with Niece Lucia about this trait of Ben's: she had the intelligence to appreciate Ben.

But at lunch the poignant present disturbed all gentle speculation about anyone's past, even the admirable Ben's, for they had not been seated more than three minutes at their chosen side-table, in the corner farthest from the cheerful band, when Mr. Buffum noticed Lucia stiffen and start, redden and fumble with the menu, stoop to pick up something she had not dropped, then with elaborate unconcern open her bag and powder her face, which had just been carefully powdered.

"How nice," she said casually. "There's George over there having lunch with such a pretty woman!"

"Ah!" said Mr. Buffum.

"Look here, Old Man," Lucia declared emphatically. "If you think I'm just a jealous little beast you've got it twisted!"

He looked at her and smiled rather sadly.

"Must be upsetting, dear. I'd give anything to prevent your being upset."

"I'm not a teacup at a party. Don't think it!"

"Do I?" He wrinkled his high forehead in question.

"Apt to: you know," she nodded.

There was silence.

"Your birthday lunch is not going to be a dud," she answered. "A bit of a shock. All right in a minute."

From the waiter, all smiling attention, Mr. Buffum ordered his favourite food, a lobster mayonnaise, and his favourite drink for such an occasion, a Moselle Cup—which a thin manager pressed forward to assure him should be mixed by himself precisely to his taste—*parfaitement*—a delicately pinched thumb and forefinger adding to the expressive assurance of eyes, voice and manner.

Alone again, Mr. Buffum leaned forward to murmur: "Wonderful fellow! After that, who could fail to find the Cup delicious?" And without waiting for a reply he placed his napkin on the table, pushed back his chair, and saying "One moment, dear," he left her, before his courage ebbed, to walk over to George's table.

George leaped to his feet at the sight of him, unaffectedly glad to see him.

"Mrs. Flamborough—Mr. Buffum."

Mr. Buffum bowed and said something courteous about a word with his young friend.



" Mr. Buffum was surprised, expecting gruff comment, to hear serious considered approval from Ben : ' Very nice : no mistake : very, very nice.' "

"I'm lunching with the cause of your rather hurried departure," he began, alluding to George's visit in January—their last meeting—when George had burst from the house in a fury. Mr. Buffum was uncertain whether George could have heard, for he retorted brightly, "Capital! How's the car going?" and turning to the very pretty Mrs. Flamborough, said in the same bright voice, "He's got a Planet."

"Oh, have you?" Mrs. Flamborough cooed. "Now, that is most interesting."

"Of course," said George, pushing his hands deep into his trousers pockets. "It's the finest car on the market at the price."

"Ah! but you are both such experts, I can see."

Mr. Buffum became most earnest. "Far from it, my dear lady. Far from it. No one could be more . . . more . . . shall I say, tentative with a motor-car than myself: very keen, very; but a duffer, a complete duffer, and it's never given any trouble even to me, a joy to drive, even though"—he looked at George with smiling eyes—"even though my young friend here sold it to me. He's a horrid expert—abominable. Good-bye—we shall be having tea at the Leicester, from six onwards. Do come."

He turned away. His arm was clutched: a hoarse whisper almost burnt his ear in its intensity.

"It's a business lunch. Solely a business lunch. I swear."

"Of course," said Mr. Buffum. "I perfectly understand that."

And returned to his table, fully prepared to account for his daring. His luck was in. He arrived with the waiter, who proudly exhibited the lobster mayonnaise for his scrutiny and approval before helping it from another table.

Mr. Buffum beamed to a firm-set Niece Lucia: "Looks good that, now doesn't it?" And he went on without a pause: "I've not seen that young man since his unceremonious departure in January." He did not take his eyes off Niece. "Can't allow any foolishness, you know, between me and my precious car's chief sponsor. That's business, you understand. Pure business. Essentially I am a business man. And the lady's a prospective buyer. I was able to help him with his deal. As a matter of fact, I thought very likely I might. Curious, but he seemed most anxious to impress upon me it was solely a business lunch. My ear still tickles with his whisper. There was no need to be so emphatic. It was obvious to anyone, quite obvious."

Niece put down her knife and fork.

"Old Man," she said with ominous quietness. "Now tell me. If you'd been here alone, would you have gone over and spoken to George Upland and a strange woman?"

"My dear, my dear!" laughed Mr. Buffum uneasily. "How can I possibly answer a question like that? Now—I ask you."

Niece did not relent: she persisted.

"I'll put it like this, then. Have you ever in your life before left your table to speak to another man who was with a stranger to you?"

"Well, if it comes to that, it certainly has not been my habit to scamper about restaurants chatting with Tom, Dick and Harry . . ." And he surprised Lucia by returning look for look, and saying, as though his usual shyness had suddenly departed: "But I would do a lot more than that for you, young woman."

She managed to falter out:

"If you ever let on . . . what I told you . . ."

Almost angrily he broke in: "Ah, child, you can trust me!"

He filled her glass with Moselle Cup and swerved recklessly from the emotional ditch.

"After the show I want to dance with you. Please. I hate a show just ending and us just gloomily going away. Will you dance with me? You must. My goodness! How I can sympathise with the small boy who sat firmly on after the curtain fell on the last act, clung to his seat, insisted, 'I'm going to sit on here and see it all over again.'"

Lucia laughed: "You're in great form, Old Man."

"Of course I am," Mr. Buffum excused himself. "It's my birthday, hang it! Who wouldn't be?"

He wisely kept to himself his joy in her pluck and resilience, his pride in her resolve to be undefeated. No sidelong glance flickered towards George's table: there was no furtive inquiry. It really seemed while she talked of her job and her plans and the show and the good times they had enjoyed together that the little shock had quickened her wits and heightened her relish of the good cheer.

She looked radiant and nodded gaily in George's direction when they left the restaurant early, not wishing to lose a moment of the show: and taking Mr. Buffum's arm

as they passed into the hall she said, not quite gaily but with no relapse into gloom: "I've not set eyes upon him since our small break in January."

Mr. Buffum immediately stopped for one foot's step and turned towards her—his whole face a question; which she answered by a fierce little series of nods and by saying: "Oh yes! If anything, more than ever!"

She added, as they advanced again after the moment's pause, with an odd laugh of her own, her very own: "Funny things, feelings, aren't they?"

He squeezed her arm to his side with his elbow.

In the taxi Lucia became ribald at Uncle's expense, wondering how many gentle quiet women bore his image within their hearts as that of the only man they could ever have loved. He assured her there were none—none at all. But how could *he* know? She *asked* him. Nothing really wrought such permanent havoc as the sort of shy tenderness and worship which emanated from his presence like scent from meadowsweet. No mere man could fathom the secret sorrow of a woman's lot. Heavens! How it hurt to be a woman. She rolled it all up in a ball and tossed it about; her mind, bravely wantoning with its own distress, allowed laughter of quality full play.

Laughter of quantity, copious shattering laughter, was offered by the rich absurdities of the show, in which Mr. Buffum for the first time in his life found the ancient fun of a drunk-scene really funny. The show was in two acts: the first act had been so uproariously amusing that he feared he must surely have laughed himself out—tickled to the death of all his laughter; but he was reckoning without Mr. Hooley and Mr. Howson, who instantly started him off again, and to such effect that, weak and prostrate, he almost welcomed the lowering of the last curtain.

As he groped for his hat and stick, he murmured to Niece Lucia: "You have such an infectious laugh, my dear."

The remark, sounding like an excuse, set her off laughing again. "Oh, I like that!" she stammered, and people near her began to laugh too.

"There, you see," said Mr. Buffum, amply corroborated.

She kept laughing on and off, all the slow way out and along the crowded streets, and Mr. Buffum had no difficulty whatever in steering her casually into the Leicester for tea.

"Oh yes, of course," she said, as they went in, "and you want to dance now, do you, you insatiable old man!"

"I most certainly do."

"Blackbird, what a boy you are! How you do go it!" Lucia aptly quoted from the works of Mr. Brown; but her Uncle muddled the words with the name of a fox-trot song and hoped vainly that his old favourite *Bye-bye, Blackbird* might be the first tune played.

"That," he said, solemnly reminiscent, "was the first tune I ever danced to in public."

"Yes. Yes. Your breakaway," she assented sadly. "The first step on the downward path."

"I shall never forget that supper at the Savoy." He continued no less solemnly, quite undeterred, "What it has led to!"

"What, indeed!" She raised her brows in mock dismay.

They sat down at a table.

Mr. Buffum leaned forward and pressed her arm.

"Your friendship," he said, giving the words their full meaning.

And for once Lucia took it quietly in and gave it him quietly back. "You old darling!" she gently said.

At which Mr. Buffum, caught unawares, blurted out his happy secret: "I mentioned to George we should be coming here: and suggested he might look in."

Consternation took him at her reception of it. She paled, and on a breathless little gasp articulated, "Oh, my dear, I wish you hadn't!"

Whereupon Mr. Buffum felt that he had laid rough hands on what was, quite beyond his comprehension, delicate.

"Forgive me for a clumsy rogue," he said. "But here he comes!"

He had been so confident that she would carry it gaily off, take it in her gallant stride, that he was horrified to see her flush deeply on greeting George and then become pale again, sitting still, little and lifeless. He could not believe his eyes. She seemed to shrink. Her face to grow pinched and smaller. A strange intensity came over her, even as she dwindled. The poor child must be feeling faint. . . .

And the young man was exuberant. And he was all attention to Mr. Buffum: the idiot noticed nothing.

"I say, you know, after my foul rudeness.



"They passed a disconsolate George."



"'I think you tease him too much,' Mr. Buffum was obliged to confide in her ear."

Barging off like that. It is too decent of you." (He stopped.) "Hurried a bit. Breathless. You know. Emō-sh, too, perhaps." (He laughed.) "But it is too decent to ask me to join you two."

Mr. Buffum caught the waiter's eye.

"Another tea, please."

"Tea-cake, not toast. Tea-cake, mind, not toast," George called out.

Apparently the idiot could not even look at Lucia, still less speak to her.

The band started *I Like Your Funny Face.*

"You've practically finished tea, haven't you?" he said to Mr. Buffum. "Do you mind if I have one dance, now—then you dance while I have my tea. What?"

Mr. Buffum smiled. George jumped up, with a bright "Come on!"

Lucia silently rose at once.

Mr. Buffum leaned hurriedly forward: "Yes, dear, but if . . ." he began.

Her hand on George's shoulder, she gave him a pitiful smile. They moved off. He watched them make their gliding circuit of the floor. Was she happy? Could she bear it? Funny things, feelings, he remembered her saying. They were approaching the table. She broke away and sat down. "Not quite myself. So sorry. Sort of giddy."

George stood with his hand on the table, looking down on her. His hand was trembling. With rage at her abrupt leaving of him? With concern for her health? Mr. Buffum wondered.

"That is a pity, isn't it?" said George, sitting down and busying himself with his tea.

A negro with the band vociferated the words of the new tune the band began to play: *Anyone can see with half an eye that I'm crazy over you.* It gave Lucia, leaning rather feebly back in her chair, a crude dig in the ribs. She looked up, caught Uncle's eye of deep concern, and shook with silent laughter, feeble as she was. Then slowly straightened up as though laughing had refreshed her.

"Yes!" rasped George, eyeing her resentfully over his teacup. "Very funny, isn't it?"

She smiled at him. "I found it so. That's why I laughed."

He leaned across the table, scowling. "Heartless. Maddening . . ." he began, then forced control, pushed himself back. "Laugh away. Why shouldn't you? Sorry."

She started forward. A little choked voice said: "Don't be silly!" She started back, erect again. George glared at her.

"I am silly." His words would have been more effective if his mouth had not been full of tea-cake. Lucia bit her lips not to laugh, partly only at the ludicrousness of it. At length she said:

"He's a bear, Old Man. Let's dance. I'm sound, now, as a nail."

Mr. Buffum took no notice.

"Did you pull it off?" he asked. "Did you sell the lady the car?"

"Oh yes, I sold it all right. Thanks very much." Casualness turned to intense bitterness as he added: "I can do that sort of thing: it's only when it comes to things that matter that I'm a hopeless failure."

"George dear!" expostulated Lucia, rising. "Whatever can matter more than business? I am afraid you're not quite your bright self this afternoon." She looked straight at him. "I was upset at seeing you again after such a long absence. That was all that was wrong with me. I have such a tender heart, you know."

She gave her own little laugh and pinched the lobe of his ear.

"Come along, Old Man."

They moved off.

"I think you tease him too much," Mr. Buffum was obliged to confide in her ear.

Her touch on him tightened. "Oh dear," she said. "I must do something. What right has he now to make me feel all goopy?"

"That's not his fault."

"Nor's teasing him my fault. Really it's not."

She nestled up to him and danced on in silence, till a little shiver of laughter ran over her and she said: "He ought to live in Lamb's island, where the little pigs run about roasted, crying 'Eat me!'"

Mr. Buffum could only retort, "You mustn't be exacting."

Again came the pressure of her hand on him. "Little boys must learn not to sit under the cherry-tree with their mouths open hoping that a nice ripe cherry will drop into them."

They were nearing their table. "Finish it with him now. Just to please me."

"Certainly not!"

They passed a disconsolate George.

"His hair gets rough when he's cross. Always."

Something in his partner's voice caused Mr. Buffum to look down into her face. Her eyes were swimming in tears, shining. She looked up into his face. "Oh! I am loving this dance," she whispered. "I shall never forget it." Another shiver passed over her body, not of laughter. She

said very slowly, "I don't think . . . it's only cross . . . I shall be making him . . . now, I mean." And a little later, "Old Man, I know. I know. I am so happy."

In a little while the dance stopped and they returned to their table. His tea, no doubt, had had a soothing effect upon George. He was less ruffled and disconsolate. He began at once to apologise.

"Sorry. You're right. I was a bear. Horrible. I'm not usually. Honestly I'm not. There's something about you. I dunno. There's no earthly reason why you should care tuppence about me."

"Fourpence, George. Fourpence three farthings."

"Shut up! But your maddening composure. I dunno. Teasing me so easily. So beastly sure of yourself. I'm blest if I haven't taken to dreaming about you. Now laugh. It does me good to be laughed at by you. Only look here. Don't just drop out, do you mind, not again. All this time since January. You're too good a *friend*. Honestly I won't . . . I mean . . . play the cad, lose my temper, act the unmitigated ass, like I did."

No answer came from Lucia. No look in his direction. Mr. Buffum out of the corner of his eye noticed the dwindling process. George, receiving no answer, turned to him: "You understand, sir. I know you understand. Don't you think she might?"

"Well here, with so many people about . . . I mean." Mr. Buffum wracked his brains. George, misunderstanding, became instantly contrite.

"Oh, I *am* sorry. Have I been shouting?"

"Not at all. Not at all. I meant . . ." One of his rare inspirations came to Mr. Buffum. "I'm staying at Lucia's flat" (she looked sharply up) "this evening. I so like these sort of talks. Why shouldn't we spend the evening together? Dine together, you know, quietly, and have a nice long talk about . . . about . . . friendliness. I should like it immensely, and it's my birthday, so Lucia's got to do as I like."

The young man's eyes shone. He held his breath, waiting for Lucia to speak. She suddenly looked up, startling Mr. Buffum.

"Oh, all right. All right. I'm game!" she said in a quick odd voice.

"Are you sure it's all right?" George asked earnestly.

"I was thinking of work perhaps that ought to be done. But it can wait."

"Oh, good!" said George, turning a beaming face first to one and then to the other. "Good. We're all friendly and nice again. I am glad. I am glad. That makes all the difference, sir. It is good of you. But we're not going just yet, are we? One more dance or—two. What?"

He looked shyly at Mr. Buffum, and half rose. Lucia put a hand on his arm and said softly and seriously: "I'm sorry, but I can't dance with you this evening, George dear."

Mr. Buffum heard the most delicate possible emphasis laid on the word *dance*, with the most delicious implications to one less obtuse than circumstance made poor George at the moment. He looked downcast and puzzled. Mr. Buffum, savouring the delightful implication, came to his rescue with a glib ease that surprised his ear to hear, carrying on the pleasant undercurrent of meaning:

"She can only dance with me to-night. Pledged to me for dancing. You see it's my birthday," and he added, poking gentle fun at George, "I know *you'll* understand."

George didn't. He looked a bit baffled, but he brightened to asseverate, "Yes. Rather."

Mr. Buffum leaned across and said behind his hand, with twinkling eyes: "She gave me braces and sock-suspenders to match. Of a beautiful light blue. She must needs furbish up old Uncle. We're none of us safe, you know."

That put the finishing touch to George's recovery. He laughed happily all over himself and remained happy, while Mr. Buffum moved off with Lucia in the dance.

"You darling," she murmured. "You darling."

"Is it me you're meaning?" he dared to inquire.

Her hand beat his shoulder in reproving taps.

"Too delicious!" she murmured on. "Spinning it out. Squeezing out the last little drop of secret delight."

"To be so brought into it." Mr. Buffum murmured back, "Bless you!"

"You've no things for the night. Have you? Nothing."

"Doesn't matter! If I sat up all night for once. What would it matter?"

She began to shake with laughter.

"You shall wear my silkiest nightie."

Yet under her laughter he felt it was somehow a new Niece he was dancing with: tenderer, he swore to himself, and even dearer: in flower; so proud he was to be thus admitted to her love—into the midst of its warmth and light and quivering joy.

"We'll go straight back to the flat," he said. "Don't you think!"

Her hand's glad pressure showed assent.

"And sup, perhaps, latish."

Her glowing face looked up at him. She whispered: "You are perfect."

Mr. Buffum was aware that she drew no veils over herself as she sat happily down by George. She seemed at peace, quite open and quite still. The strain had passed from George's face. All three sat content and silent, until the young man felt he must give his reason for the quietness and said in a gentle voice: "I missed you so. I'm so happy to be with you, again."

Lucia said: "One more dance with you, Old Man, and then we'll go. I want a waltz." She closed her eyes. "The dreamiest of the dreamy."

Their luck was in. It was a waltz. *A Shady Tree.* An ancient favourite. After which they drove to Lucia's flat, a compact arrangement of small high rooms at the top of an enormous house in Queen's Gate. She showed George into the sitting-room.

"I'll be with you in a moment," she said. "I must just see to Uncle."

"A little rest is exactly what I want," said Mr. Buffum in the minute bedroom, meant for a maid, used for a spare-room. He removed his shoes, lay on the bed; she made him comfy with a book. Evening light glowed through the window. She kissed him and left him without a word: to return in a few minutes, in a little frock of soft flimsy stuff he had never before seen. She walked swiftly up to him and wrapped her arms closely round his neck.

"Dear girl," said Mr. Buffum. "How lovely of you!"

"I am going to him, now. He won't be cross, do you think?" she whispered, and gave the gentlest little laugh.

Then swiftly she was gone.

Mr. Buffum, alone, did not attempt to read. He lay brooding, in that strange deep place of consciousness where joy and sorrow meet so closely as to be almost indistinguishable. The light faded as he lay brooding. He lost all sense of time. Perhaps he slept. "May their appreciation of each other grow," was one thought or prayer that emerged. "May I remain sensitive to the joy of others, responsive to the grief of others, and so keep young," was another.

The door opened. Lucia's voice said: "Come into the sitting-room, dear."

He tidied up a little and went.

She was standing very still by the mantelpiece, the same, yet not the same. Her small head was a little bent. She did not look up. A soft radiance seemed to come from her whole slight body as she stood, and when she slowly raised her head and smiled, shone out from her whole small face.

"George gone?" he asked.

She nodded. The corners of her mouth kept quivering.

"An elfin creature, scarcely human," Mr. Buffum suddenly thought, striving to record the difference in her. "Or else for once divinely human," his mind leaped to add.

She closed her eyes and clenched her fingers and said in a quick little voice: "I feel kissed all over. Still."

Then she relaxed and sat down, leaning forward, her hands touching her cheeks, not to let another's touch escape.

"I must tell you," she said. "I said nothing. I couldn't speak. Just listened. He talked. Couldn't ask a girl to marry him until he had a thousand a year. That sort of thing. Oh, on and on! Rot! I mean . . . In a way. Anyhow, at last he did stop. I just sat. Then suddenly he put his head in my lap and began to cry."

There was a long pause. Came very quickly, "So did I," followed by a catch in her breath. She got up as though to shake herself free of it. "Then he began to kiss me. Went on." She looked up, bewilderment on her face, bewildered still even at the thought of it. "Like one long wonderful kiss. Drowning . . . No. Soaring. That's all."

She hid her face in her hands.

"What's the time?" she started up to ask.

"Just after ten."

"Three hours," she said, astonished.

"Supper?" he asked.

"Yes. I'll slip on a cloak and come."

But she ran back from the door and put her hands on Mr. Buffum's shoulders. "I couldn't have spoilt it, now could I, with talk of arrangements, and life and the future?"

"There'll be plenty of time for that, I think," Mr. Buffum answered, smiling.

She turned again at the door to say quickly: "On your birthday too. Are you glad?"

"Yes, dear," said Mr. Buffum. "Very glad indeed."

And for all the hopes and fears a man must have for the future of one so dear, he fully meant it, fully—as he regarded her present radiance.

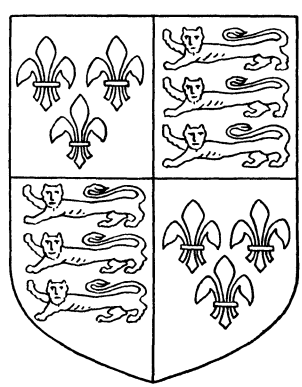
All who have followed Mr. Buffum's amusing reactions to the younger generation as typified by Niece Lucia will be interested to know that the story will shortly be published in book form under the title "Mr. Buffum."

Our Great Public Schools

THEIR TRADITIONS, CUSTOMS & GAMES

By F. A. M. WEBSTER

SHREWSBURY SCHOOL



AT Michaelmas, in the year 1549, the Corporation of Shrewsbury paid their Recorder, one Reginald Corbet, the sum of ten shillings for his services in obtaining a Free School for the town. They also tipped the Lord Chancellor's servant twenty pence "for his favour in the same." Not long after these happenings it is recorded that the Corporation paid for the purchase of a Free School the sum of £20, the equivalent to-day of some three or four hundred pounds sterling.

The activities of the municipal body in this matter were both right and understandable, for the minions of Henry VIII had seen to it that Shropshire did not escape in the general despoiling of the monasteries, and the educational and other endowments of the Abbey and sister churches had disappeared.

At the head of the bailiffs and burgesses of Shrewsbury and the chief people of the surrounding country, who sought the institution of a new free school, were Richard Whittaker and Hughe Edwardes.

As soon as the Free School was purchased a petition was addressed to King Edward VI for its endowment, by the grant of some portion of the lands held formerly by the collegiate churches, which had since been dissolved. This petition was granted, and in 1552 there was founded "The Royal Free Grammar School of King Edward the Sixth," with one master and one undermaster.

During Queen Mary's reign the charter remained in abeyance and thus it happened that the school was not actually opened until 1562. In that year Thomas Ashton was appointed to the Mastership at £40 per annum, the Undermaster receiving ten pounds a year less.

The new Shrewsbury School very quickly drew pupils from the families of the county gentry of Cheshire, Worcestershire, North Wales, Shropshire and Staffordshire. At that time both English and Welch were freely spoken by the boys. Camden, in his voluminous work *Britannia*, tells us of that period that in Shrewsbury School "were more schollers in number when I first saw it than in any one schoole in England again."

According to Camden, the first headmaster was a man of great worth and integrity. Certain it is that he had the interests of the school very much at heart, for after he had resigned the reins of government in 1571, to take the post of tutor to the ill-starred Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, Ashton prevailed upon Queen Elizabeth to augment the endowments by reserving the tithes of Chirbury to the use of the school



[*Sport & General.*

THE SIXTH FORM.

Shrewsbury, as further endowed by Queen Elizabeth in 1571, was a fair and stately building of white freestone and had an excellent library. There were also very good houses for the masters, and the buildings were, in fact, in no way inferior to those of many colleges in the Universities. There was also, some five miles away at a place called Grinshill, an additional School House, to which the masters and their pupils might retire for the continuance of study during times of sickness and pestilence. Westminster, it may be remembered, maintained a similar retreat at Chiswick, to which Dr. Busby withdrew the boys at the time of the Great Plague. The whole cost of the original Shrewsbury buildings was something over £3,000.

The Grinshill house was built out of surplus revenue, after a tripartite indenture had been executed, dated February 11th, 1571, between the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, as Visitor, the Bailiffs and Burgesses of Shrewsbury, the Master and Fellows of St. John's College, Cambridge, and the Master and Undermaster of the school. The government of the school then vested in the bailiffs and the headmaster, under the superintendence of the Visitor, but St. John's College retained the right of appointing the headmaster. Other surplus funds were utilised for the foundation of two scholarships for boys of the school at St. John's College, Cambridge. There was made a proviso that preference of election should be given to natives of Shrewsbury, then to the sons of burgesses born in the suburbs, or in the parish of Chirbury, and, lastly, to all natives of Shropshire.

In 1573, Sir Henry Sidney, Lord President of the Welch Marches, visited Shrewsbury. In connection with his coming the chronicles of the time state "ther was shott off in a ryaltie 18 chamber peces at a voyde place under the Wyld Copp . . . and at the foot of the Wyld Copp was an excellent oracion made unto him by one of the scollers of the Free Schoole." It appears, also, that a sum of 7*s.* 2*d.* was expended upon wine and cakes for Mr. Philip Sidney at the coming to town of my Lord President his father.

This youth, then 19 years of age, was educated at Shrewsbury and became afterwards the famous Sir Philip Sidney.

When Sir Henry Sidney revisited the town a few years later he was entertained with a banquet at which it is said that all the Shrewsbury scholars were present, they being at that time 360 in number.

This second visit seems to have been even more impressive than the first, for when the Lord President took his departure by water there were placed on an island, by which his barge must pass, a number of the schoolboys, apparelled in green, with willows upon their heads, who sped his parting with such dismal lamentations that people on land and in the barges were moved to tears



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J. B. OLDHAM'S HOUSE.

and the Lord President visibly changed countenance.

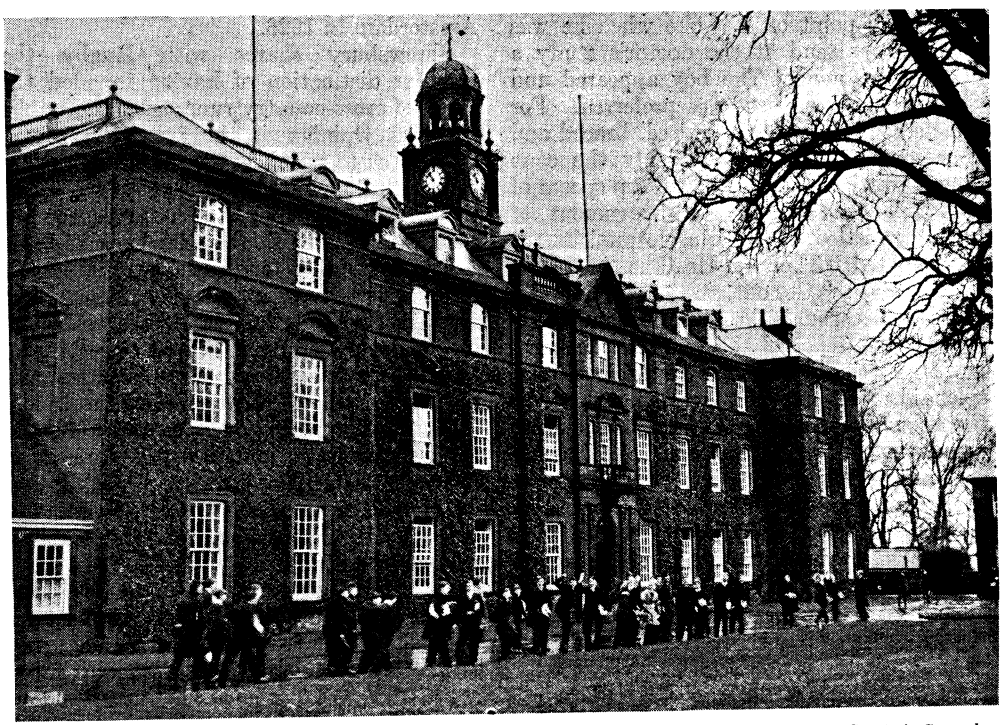
In 1583 John Meighen was appointed to the headmastership, which he was to hold for best part of a half-century. He, like Thomas Ashton, was a man of strong character, and, although repeated attempts were made by influential people to impoverish the school, by changing its ordinances and taking away some of its property, he lost not one whit of the privileges and endowments which the first headmaster had obtained for the institution.

John Stow, in his *Annales*, refers to Meighen and the school and tells us that it was one of the first in the country and had then "one chiefe Schoolemaster and three under Schoolemasters."

Meighen, however, only checked the activities of the would-be marauders, he could not entirely stop them. And so, throughout a long period, the controversy raged between the Corporation and St. John's College; until, in 1724, the Court of Chancery and the House of Lords set aside the appointment of a headmaster by the Corporation under the original charter. The dispute was finally settled in 1798, when the government of the School passed, by Act of Parliament, to thirteen trustees, including the Mayor of Shrewsbury for the time being.

The right of St. John's College, Cambridge, to appoint the headmaster was confirmed; it was ordained that the sons of burgesses of Shrewsbury should receive a free education and that surplus funds were to be employed for founding further University scholarships.

Shrewsbury, like Harrow, Rugby, and a score of other famous schools, was founded mainly for the free education of the poor of a particular locality, but Shrewsbury, quite early in its history, attracted the upper



[*Sport & General.*

THE SCHOOL BUILDING.

classes, and only 277 out of the first 800 in the School Register were "oppedani"; the first boy came from Buckinghamshire. Dr. Samuel Butler and Dr. B. H. Kennedy gave Shrewsbury an even wider scope as a boarding school of the first order.

At the time when a Chancery scheme was put forward for the management of the School, in 1853, there were already six-and-twenty scholarships or exhibitions, varying in annual value from £10 to £60, and tenable for three to eight years at either Oxford or Cambridge. In 1865, there were eight masters on the staff, but, out of a possible

maximum of three hundred boys, there were a hundred and eight boarders, twenty-seven sons of burgesses, and eighty-six day-boys.

In the sixties of the last century the Clarendon Commissioners recommended that at the expiration of five-and-twenty years, all local and other particular rights to free education at the School should be abolished.

There is told a good tale concerning Dr. Kennedy, who established Shrewsbury upon its present-day lines. It appears that some greatly daring youngster put forward the school clock one April 1st by way of a jest. Wherefore Chapel bell was rung an hour too soon. The humorist, however, rather missed the point of the joke when he was warned to attend at the doctor's study a little before noon. The boy appeared and the expected request was preferred. For some seconds the victim waited, braced and bent for punishment; suddenly the cane sang through the air, but no sharp spasm of pain followed; again the instrument of torture whistled, but, again, no punishment was inflicted. Then the Headmaster said in a mild voice: "Get out, you April Fool!"

In 1882, through the initiative and courageous persistence of the then Headmaster, Dr. Moss, the School was transferred to a splendid site, some fifty acres in extent, in the suburb of Kingsland, south of the river upon which Shrewsbury boys have learned that oarsmanship which has been the backbone of numerous Oxford and Cambridge crews. The tale of Shrewsbury rowing is one of good years and bad, of unbroken runs of success, due to the appointment of some master of outstanding coaching ability and to much of that sort of spadework, by those in charge of the school rowing, which represents about ninety per cent. of the basis of success of the average good oarsman.

The School is always represented among the entries for the Ladies' Plate at Henley, which they won in 1924. Shrewsbury and Eton are the only two schools that have ever won this event.

Among famous oarsmen the school has recently produced are G. H. Amble and S. K. Tubbs, the Cambridge Rowing Presidents of 1925–6 and 1926–7, and J. G. H. Lander, stroke of First Trinity Light-Four which won the Olympic Games "Fours" at Amsterdam in 1928.

Shrewsbury shares with Rugby the peculiar distinction of having founded the sport of cross-country running at the public schools. Opinion is, in fact, very much divided as to which is the older institution, the Crick Run, founded at Rugby in 1837, or the Shrewsbury Runs, which are recorded in an extant Hound Book as far back as 1831.

The system of long-distance running at Shrewsbury is organised as a hunt. The Captain is called the Huntsman, and there are Senior and Junior Whips—one of each. Those boys who win their school running colours are called "Gentlemen of the Runs."

Runs take place once a week in the Michaelmas term, and the procedure is as follows: The Huntsman, Senior Whip and Gentlemen of the Runs lead the way, followed by the Pack, who, not being Gentlemen of the Runs, are styled Hounds. For some of the shorter runs as many as a hundred and fifty couples of hounds have been drawn up in formal array by the school gates. There are usually four "all-ups" in a run, and at each of these the Huntsman and his Gentlemen wait for the Pack and the Junior Whip, who always runs with the rearmost Hound.

After the last "all-up" the Huntsman, Senior Whip and Gentlemen go on ahead, and after a short interval the Junior Whip starts the "run-in." As the Pack come up to the Huntsman he runs beside the leading hound, the Senior Whip with the second,

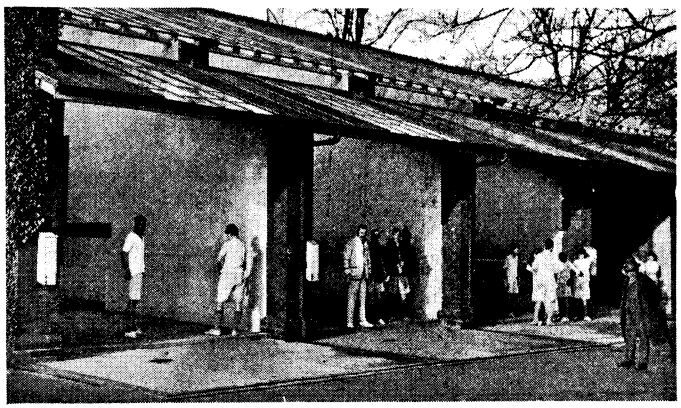


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PART OF THE SCHOOL WALL ON WHICH BOYS WHO HAVE RECEIVED DISTINCTION ARE ALLOWED TO CARVE THEIR NAMES.

and the Gentlemen with the next hounds in order of seniority. There are usually half a dozen Gentlemen when the Hunt is out at full strength. If the order of the leading hounds changes the Huntsman always takes the leader.

A Run is usually from five to eight miles, with a run-in of two to two and a half miles. There are four Picked Runs every year, for which eight or ten of the best hounds are chosen and have to undergo a medical examination to certify their fitness to stand the test. These Runs are rather longer, being from ten to twelve miles, and the run-in is of three or four miles.



[*Sport & General.*

THE FIVES COURT.

The first hound home usually gets his Gentlemen of the Runs colours, but if the Pack is not well up at the "all-ups," the Huntsman may decide not to award colours.

One of these runs, known as "The Long," has no "all-ups," and is eight or nine miles. In this run the Huntsman, Whips and Gentlemen of the Runs take a competing part; and, again, the first hound home gets his G.O.R. Colours.

There is one run called "The Tucks," which is the shortest of them all, and every-one in the School who is fit enough is expected to go for it. The small boys, that is to say those under five feet in height, do not go all the way.

"The Tucks" was originated, in the first place, to keep the boys from attending Shrewsbury Races; although the races no longer take place, the whole School is expected to take part in "The Tucks."

In all runs the hounds are counted in couples thus: Couples started 12, Couples through 10½.

The hunt is quite separate from the School track and field athletic sports, but these are always managed by the Huntsman, who also awards colours for the annual athletic match against Cheltenham. The Hunt, which has an annual cross-country fixture with Rugby, was founded about 1840 and is, so far as I know, the oldest institution of its kind. The Huntsman and Whips are allowed to carry hunting crops and horns and the Gentlemen bear batons.

The appointment of Huntsman is probably the most coveted distinction the School has to confer and carries with it the unique privilege of wearing a black velvet cap with crossed whips on the peak in gold embroidery and a bright scarlet sweater and stockings.

In former days the Gentlemen of the Runs were allowed to run coatless; nowadays they are privileged to wear flannel shorts, but for many years the hounds were forbidden to discard their jackets and were compelled to carry mortar-board caps, from which, not unnaturally, it became the custom to remove every atom of stiffening material.

The batons which are now borne by the Gentlemen of the Runs are a relic of the days when they were real bludgeons, and, as such, were employed for both defensive and offensive purposes against the town roughs, who delighted in nothing more than to turn out and stone the boys taking part in the Runs. Nowadays a baton often serves the purpose of a handle by which some run-out youngster may be given a tow by a kindly disposed G.O.R. Or, again, the baton now serves as a record for the sport. It is first of all ringed to denote years, and little straight notches are cut to represent each run taken part in. If the owner of the baton, either as a hound or a G.O.R., "kills," that is to say is first man home, he substitutes a cross for the straight notch to commemorate his triumph; should he finish second, then he is entitled to decorate his baton with a square bracket.

In the old days, too, the first six or eight up in the "Picked Runs" were allowed a hot supper at the shop at the expense of the Hunt, by way of reward.

The Hunt season closes with the Senior and Junior Steeplechases, which are held in the Easter Term, some time before the

Athletic Sports. These races may be less strenuous in the present generation, but in former years a course of about two miles used to be planned by a committee of non-competitors, who selected the stiffest piece of country they could possibly find, which would embrace the greatest number of thick Shropshire hedges. Nor was that all, for the most impenetrable parts of the most difficult obstacles were chosen, and



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A GENTLEMAN OF THE RUNS WITH HIS BATON.

in each case marked by strips of paper. On the day two small boys were stationed, not more than five yards apart, as a further guide to the portion of the hedge to be negotiated.

It was the custom, on the eve of the steeplechases, for the Huntsman and Whips, with due pomp and circumstance and much blowing of horns, to conduct the entrants round the course, for the purpose of pointing out the "jumps," which, however, no one was permitted to examine too closely. And, since the Shropshire hedges are notoriously stubborn, as every hunting man knows, it was found necessary to equip each runner with a stout pair of hedging gloves, stitched tightly to the sleeves of his vest or sweater; but, even so, all the boys usually ended up as perfect cross-word puzzles of scratches.

In those days the technical terms of the sport were mostly borrowed from the Turf. Each runner had a racing name and his own "owner," whose task was anything but a sinecure. For the boy chosen for that office was not only expected to attend to every requirement of his "horse" upon the day, but was also required to run with him in training, and to coach him in the best ways of negotiating various obstacles, with the least degree of damage to himself. Such training was known by the terse term of "belly hedging" and described the only true method of crossing a close-cropped hedge.

Many of the original customs connected with the Steeplechases still obtain and some of the old racing terms are still in use. Race cards are printed with the names of the runners under the heading "Horses" and the names of the "owners" under the heading "Owners."

When the steeplechases are held "owners" run with their "horses" most of the way, going through gates and gaps and cutting off corners, so that when the competitors come to the run-in, the owners are sufficiently fresh to run with their "horses" to the winning-post, encouraging them as they make their last desperate efforts over the final 300 yards or so.

The difference between steeplechasing at Shrewsbury and at Rugby, the two progenitors of the sport, lies in the nature of the obstacles which break up the course. At Shrewsbury all that a boy thinks of is how best to get across a stiff hedge. At Rugby, on the other hand, it is water jumping practice that is organised by private enterprise. And years ago it was no unusual thing for little parties of two or three boys to go out and jump and re-jump Kedron and Clifton brooks as often as time would allow. The Hon. M. J. Brooks, holder of the Oxford and Cambridge High Jump record (which he set at 6 ft. 2½ ins. as long ago as 1876), and his brother, were great adepts at this sort of thing. Another practice was for a master to take a party of boys by train to Birdingbury, whence they would return to Rugby on foot, having

jumped every possible piece of water they had encountered.

Athletics proper, by which I mean track and field events, have been more popular at Shrewsbury than at almost any other school, with the possible exception of Bedford.

Away back at the end of the last century the fallacies in vogue on the subject of training were very numerous and, curiously enough, most of them emanated from old professional athletes. In those days there had been established for many years at Shrewsbury an old factotum, known as Joe, whose other name was Chune. In the heyday of his youth this individual had competed in a Sheffield Handicap. Some said he had won it, others that he had been beaten by inches; but what did it matter how he had fared? One thing was certain, he had run; *ergo*, anything that Joe did not know about training simply was not athletic lore at all. In reality, the whole of Joe's advice was based upon diet—to him that was the be-all and end-all of training, his "King Charles's head" in fact.

"You get 'em, sir, to send you a nice light cake from home," was the burden of his song, and at that he left it; but doubtless his reputation and his presence did much to establish the athletic tradition at Shrewsbury.

In 1920—in which year, incidentally, D. G. A. Lowe, of Highgate, made his athletic *début*, as winner of the Half-mile—Shrewsbury, for the first time since the trophy was instituted in 1899, inscribed their name upon the Public Schools Challenge Cup, which is held for one year by the School whose representatives score the greatest number of points throughout the programme.

E. P. Hewetson, now Treasurer to the Oxford University A.C., won the Mile in 4 min. 39⅘ sec., T. Morris took the Three-quarter Mile Steeplechase in 4 min. 30⅕ sec., and another Shrewsbury boy finished second in the 100 Yards.

The following year was a record one in the annals of the Public Schools Challenge Cup Meeting. Not only was there a record entry of 409 from sixty schools, but His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales consented to be present and to distribute the challenge cups and medals. For the second time Shrewsbury won the Challenge Cup.

Hewetson had no trouble in holding his One-Mile title, and, had he been pressed, a new record might well have gone on the books; he surprised most people by securing second place in the Long Jump. A third place was obtained in the Half-Mile, while D. C. Bennett, returning the fine time of 4 min. 12 sec., succeeded to his fellow Salopian, T. Morris, in the Three-quarter Mile Steeplechase title, and R. R. Woods took the 100 Yards sprint in 10⅘ sec. Hewetson afterwards received the Public Schools Points Challenge Cup from the hands of the Prince of Wales. As an Oxford Blue he ran second to D. G. A. Lowe, C.U.A.C., in the Inter-Varsity Mile, 1924, became President of the O.U.A.C. in 1925 and ran second to R. S. Starr, C.U.A.C., in the Mile. He also gained blues for Cricket and Hockey.



[*Sport & General.*

THE ROYAL SHREWSBURY SCHOOL HUNT.

The captain, called the "huntsman" (in dark sweater), senior and junior whips, and gentlemen of the runs.

Since 1921 Shrewsbury have never competed at Stamford Bridge but have none the less turned out some athletes of outstanding merit, especially at Cambridge.

R. L. Howland is perhaps the outstanding figure of the post-war period, for he has won the Shot Put three times for Cambridge against Oxford, made a Freshman's record when he first went up, and has recently, at 46 ft., made the best shot put ever yet achieved by an Englishman. He has represented England in numerous Internationals, Great Britain at the Olympic Games, and is no mean performer at a furlong on the flat. He was for a short time a master of Eton, but has recently been elected to a Fellow-



[*Sport & General.*

R. L. HOWLAND,

who, at 46 ft., made the best shot put yet achieved by an Englishman.

ship at St. John's, his old College at Cambridge. D. M. Wilson, President of the C.U.A.C. last year, was Huntsman at Shrewsbury. L. St. C. Ingrams represented Oxford for three years in the Long Jump, and in 1921 won the Inter-Varsity event at 22 ft. 0½ in., thus breaking H. M. Abrahams' run of successes. Another famous Shrewsbury Long Jumper is G. W. Pomeroy, C.U.A.C., who placed second against Oxford in 1927, but took the award in 1928 at 22 ft. 4 in. Other Shrewsbury distance runners, in addition to Hewetson and Wilson, have been J. B. Blagden, Cross-Country Blue 1922, and C. E. G. Green, Cambridge, who won the Inter-Varsity Half and One Mile events in 1928 and the Mile in 1929, and the present Cambridge Half-Miler, J. M. Mason.

The present great representative of Shrewsbury in Inter-University athletics is R. M. N. Tisdall, possibly one of the greatest all-round athletes who ever pulled on a spiked shoe, as his remarkable performances in the Oxford and Cambridge Relay Races 1929 and Sports 1930 bear witness.

At his first appearance at Fenner's in 1928 Tisdall set up a Freshman's Shot Putting record of 38 ft. 4½ in., which gained him his Alverston colours; he was awarded his Relay colours for both the high and low hurdles that winter, and gained his blue in the spring of 1929, when he won the low hurdles against Oxford. On tour with the Achilles Club last year (1929) he made a new South African Furlong Hurdles record of 25⅖ sec., and on his return to England was only beaten by inches in a 200 yards flat handicap off 3 yards start, in 20 seconds. On the same afternoon he cleared 22 ft. 3½ in. in a Long Jump contest, and has beaten 42 ft. in the Shot Put. He may well credit Shrewsbury and Cambridge University with some world's records before he retires from active competition. At the C.U.A.C. Sports, 1930, he won the 220 yards Low Hurdles in 24⅖ sec., the fastest time ever returned in this country, and at the Oxford and Cambridge Sports won both the high and low hurdles and was beaten by only 4 inches in the Shot Putting event.

Shrewsbury, of course, is one of the few remaining great "Soccer" schools. Among the teams they meet are Charterhouse, Malvern, and Repton, and among the School's many famous players of Association football mention must be made of L. B. Blaxland, the famous Corinthian, and the Oxford Blues J. M. Peterson, who captained the team in 1924–5 and took a first in Mods and Greats, P. S. Snow 1928–9, and A. T. Barber, who achieved blues for Association football, golf and cricket. He captained the Oxford Cricket XI in 1928 and is to captain Yorkshire in 1930.

The principal fixtures of the cricket season



[*Sport & General.*

R. M. N. TISDALL.

One of the greatest all-round athletes who ever pulled on a spiked shoe.

are with Uppingham, Rossall, Repton and Malvern. "Fives" matches are played against Eton, Uppingham, and Repton; Hockey and Rugby football are played unofficially in the Easter Term.

At Shrewsbury there are very few distinctive customs in the matter of dress.

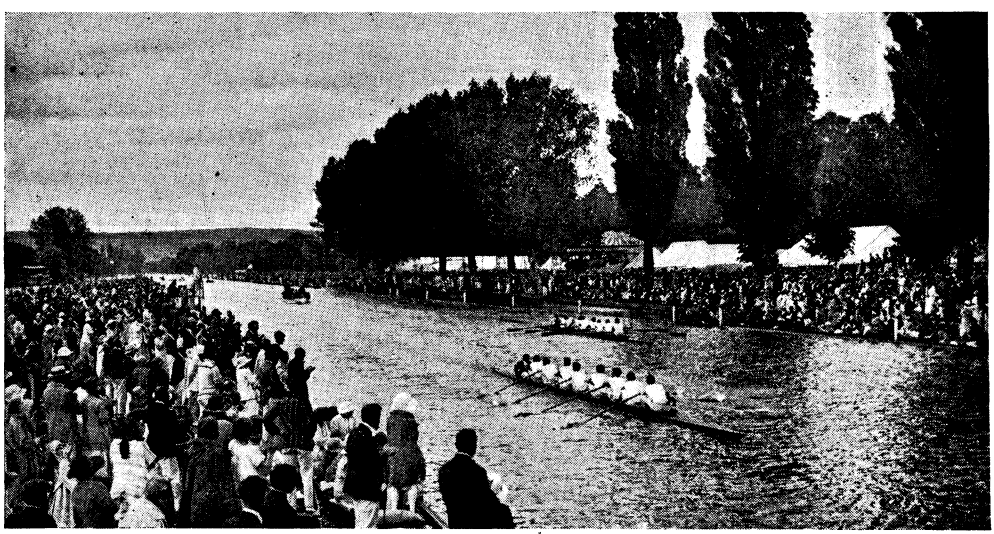
Boys who have gained their school "firsts" are allowed the privilege of wearing coloured socks and soft collars. On weekdays a dark blue suit is usually worn, but on Sundays everyone wears a morning coat, or Eton jacket, with a top-hat. The Præpostors are allowed, in addition, to sport butterfly collars and to carry sticks, but most schools have such minor peculiarities of their own. Many of these are not School rules but recently developed customs.

Among the *alumni* of Shrewsbury have been Sir Philip Sidney, already mentioned, Wycherley the Restoration dramatist, Ambrose Philips, who was Pope's "namby pamby," the Marquis of Halifax, Judge Jeffreys, Charles Darwin, Stanley Weyman, the well-known writer of historical romances, and Lord Rochdale, President of the British Olympic Association.

One other noteworthy circumstance of Shrewsbury history is the enormous number of eminent classical scholars which the School produced during the last century, chiefly under the headmasterships of Butler and Kennedy, though Dr. Moss worthily maintained, and his successor, Dr. Alington, revived it after a temporary lapse. Dr. Alington, who is now headmaster of Eton, did wonderful work in inspiring fresh interest in work and games. Of these the following names, at least, will be well known to everyone who takes any interest in classics at all; H. A. J. Munro, Robert Scott (of Liddell and Scott fame), Richard Shilleto, W. W. How, C. G. Gepp, R. D. Archer-Hind, Sir Owen Seaman (Editor of *Punch*), B. H. Kennedy, F. A. Paley, J. E. B. Major, C. E. Graves, G. H. Hallam, W. E. Heitland, and T. E. Page.

Shrewsbury has every right to be satisfied with its sporting achievements, but the chief pride of the School lies in its great record in Scholarship and University "Distinctions." It is a special feature of Shrewsbury that so many great athletes have also been good scholars. Some of the most outstanding are R. L. Howland, already mentioned, J. M. Peterson, Captain of Oxford Football, and S. K. Tubbs, President of the C.U.B.C.

The Ordinances of 1577 fixed no limit to the age at which a boy might enter the School, nor demanded any more serious qualifications than the ability to write his name with his own hand, to read English perfectly and to possess a rudimentary knowledge of Latin grammar. The entrance fee in those days varied from 10*s*., 6*s*. 8*d*.



[*Sport & General*.

THE FINISH OF THE FINAL FOR THE LADIES' CHALLENGE PLATE AT HENLEY, 1924.

Shrewsbury School beating Jesus College, Cambridge. Eton and Shrewsbury are the only schools that have won the Ladies' Plate.

and 3*s.* 4*d.* for a lord's, knight's and gentleman's son, to 4*d.* for "every burgess's son inhabiting within the town or the liberties thereof, or of the Abbey Foregate, if he be of ability," whereafter education was given free.

To-day the School staff has grown from one master and one undermaster, to a Headmaster and thirty-three Assistant Masters. There are nine Houses, containing, approximately, four hundred and eighty boarders, and there are, in addition, between thirty and forty day-boys.

The School has a good boathouse on the river close at hand, and about a hundred and eighty boys belong to the Boat Club. This boathouse was presented to the school by Mr. Pugh, in memory of his son J. E. Pugh, O.S., who was killed flying in France in 1918. The cricket and football grounds are excellent, and there is a good Library, Reading Room and Picture Gallery in the Moser Buildings. In addition to the big gymnasium, where every boy who enters the School undergoes a course of physical training, there are twelve covered fives courts, a large covered swimming bath, a carpenter's shop, a museum and a miniature rifle range. The Officers' Training Corps attends the Public Schools Camp annually, and also sends a team to Bisley to shoot for the Ashburton Shield.

The School Arms incorporate the lions of England and the lilies of France, and commemorate the two royal founders, Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth.

The same arms are used by Sherborne and King Edward's School, Birmingham. The School Motto runs: *Intus si recte, ne labora.*

Back Numbers containing the articles on ETON, HARROW, WINCHESTER, RUGBY and WESTMINSTER can still be obtained. Future issues will include CHARTERHOUSE, CLIFTON, CHELTENHAM, HAILEYBURY, etc.

COQUETTE.

BECAUSE my eyes are shadow soft,
Because my hands are fair,
And dark as ash-buds in the Spring
The darkness of my hair;
Because I smile when others sigh,
And laugh when others weep,
And though I give to all my love,
Give none that love to keep—
O, friends whose hearts are all aflame
Because my heart is soft—
Am I to blame?

I grieve to see you sad, my friends,
And only smile because
I've heard so many times before
Reproaches fierce as yours!
With but the arching of my brows
And you resolve in vain,
Or with the curve of my red lips—
And you are mine again.
My lovers—look me in the eyes,
Say—would you have me otherwise?

NOEL KAYE.



IN A PYRENEAN VALLEY.

THE PYRENEES AND THEIR VALLEYS

By ELEANOR ELSNER

Photographs by the Author.

IT is becoming a generally accepted fact that the Pyrenees are the most interesting and delightful mountains in Europe; furthermore, that they have something about them which is quite apart from other mountains. What this something is can only be explained with difficulty, as everyone attributes it to some different cause. One of the reasons most frequently given is that of their position, lying as they do between the sunny plains of France and those high plateaux of Spain, still more sun-soaked and wild.

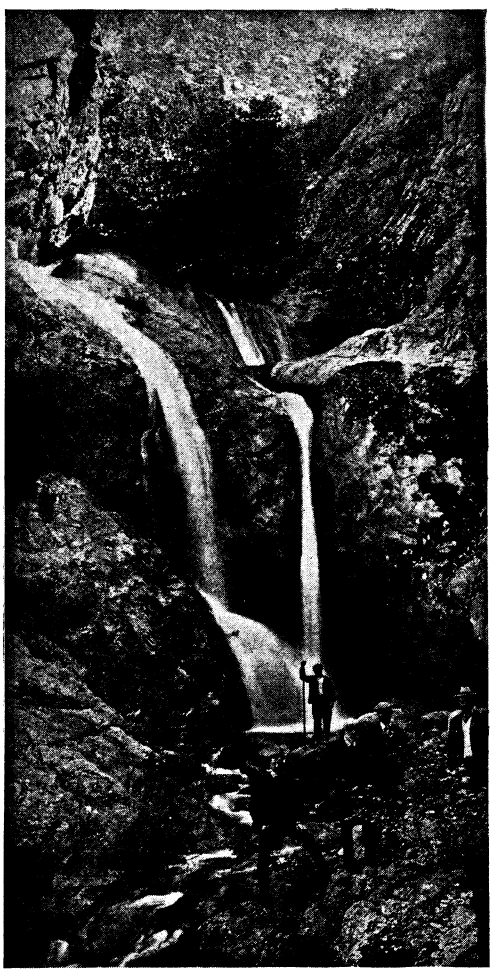
The Pyrenees stretch up gradually from these plains, beginning with foot-hills, rising to their greatest heights in the centre of the range.

In many of the highest parts one has extensive views into both countries. France stretches away to the north in dim blue distance; the view into Spain is more forbidding, but one looks between rocky peaks and fantastic crags down through a golden yellow mist on to wild plains which always remind me of the prairie.

This seems to me to be *one* of the outstanding characteristics of these mountains —even in the very heart of them, surrounded with towering peaks which crowd round you, there is always a view through, as it were,

a long distant vista of plains and meadows and far-stretching country beyond. This gives a feeling of space and vastness unusual among mountains—one can breathe and is not always shut in.

This is well exemplified in two special views, both celebrated beauty spots in the Pyrenees; the first and best known is that from the terrace at Pau, from which



A WATERFALL IN THE SIERRA DE RONDA.

there is supposed to be the finest mountain view in Europe. Here, indeed, the chain of the Pyrenees lies open before you! On the left one sees the mountains above Bagnères de Bigorre, with the Pic d'Arncille over fifty miles to the east, then, following a great semicircle, the eye catches one peak after another, from the Pic du Midi de Bigorre, Mount Balaitons, Ségalas, the twin Pics du Midi d'Ossau, round to Mount Vignemale and the Pic d'Anie, far away in the west.

This extraordinary range rises up above the lower, well-wooded foot-hills like a mirage in the sky. There is almost always a bank of mist behind the foot-hills, which lie just across the Gave (river or torrent) de Pau, and are very distinct in the immediate foreground. Then comes the shimmering lake of mist, and behind that the giants! But there is nothing of the terror and awe which some mountains inspire. The Pyrenees are friendly mountains—kindly and benignant forces—which shed forth blessing and pleasure, and the sight of them is an ever-present joy and delight. The second view is from the terrace at Font Romen, in front of which lie stretched in a wonderful panorama the mountains of the Cerdaque.

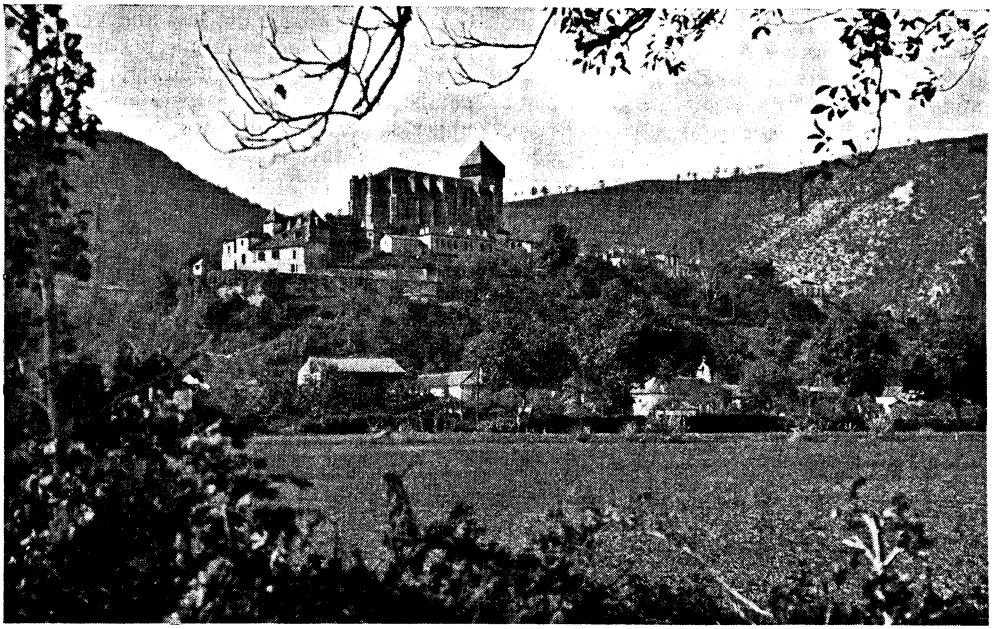
Right up in the heights here, at an altitude of 1,800 metres, one sees these great mountains sleeping in the sunlight. In winter they are like huge crested waves, rolling in a sea of creamy foam. In summer they are even more beautiful, with their deep purple shadows, the sun picking out dark forests and green meadows on the lower slopes, and changing their rocky summits into fairy castles and palaces. There is something very attractive and arresting to me in both of these views, and I have watched them hour after hour, wondering, at last, if the mountains are really rolling gently under some great earth swell, or if it were only the wind stroking their forests, or the shadows of clouds moving over their flanks.

To me this is the distinctive peculiarity of the Pyrenees—and one which I have remarked in many different places there—the sensation of actual movement! Whether one is watching a long chain of hills in the distance, or the side of a mountain covered with forest, or the meadows of grass in the valleys, the sensation is the same.

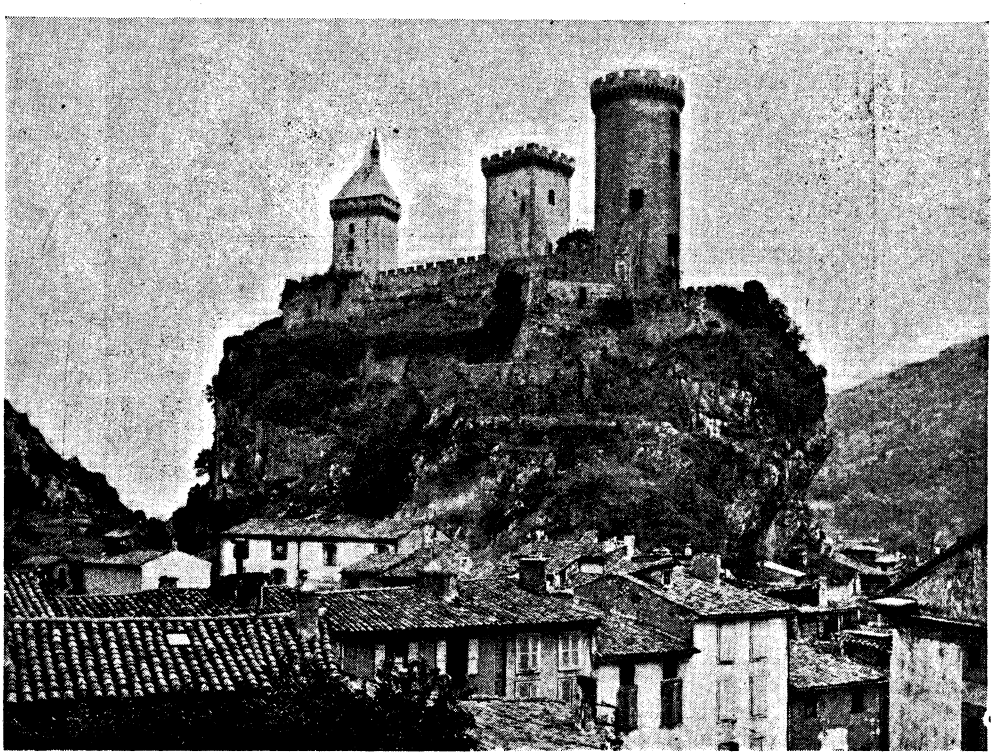
Gradually, as one looks, the landscape seems to *move*—to sway very gently to and fro . . . "the wind in the tree-tops" I was always told, but no such explanation satisfied me, for the forest swayed *to and fro*, not always one way. It was like the rhythmic beating of a great heart, scarcely perceptible, yet quite regular.

After I had once become conscious of this swaying, breathing movement, I could never get away from it. I saw it in the forests, in the shadows of the clouds, in the sunshine changing and moving on the rocks, in the soft swing of the grasses in the meadows.

Oh, the beauty of those Pyrenean meadows



ST. BERTRAND DE COMMINGES.



THE CASTLE, FOIX.

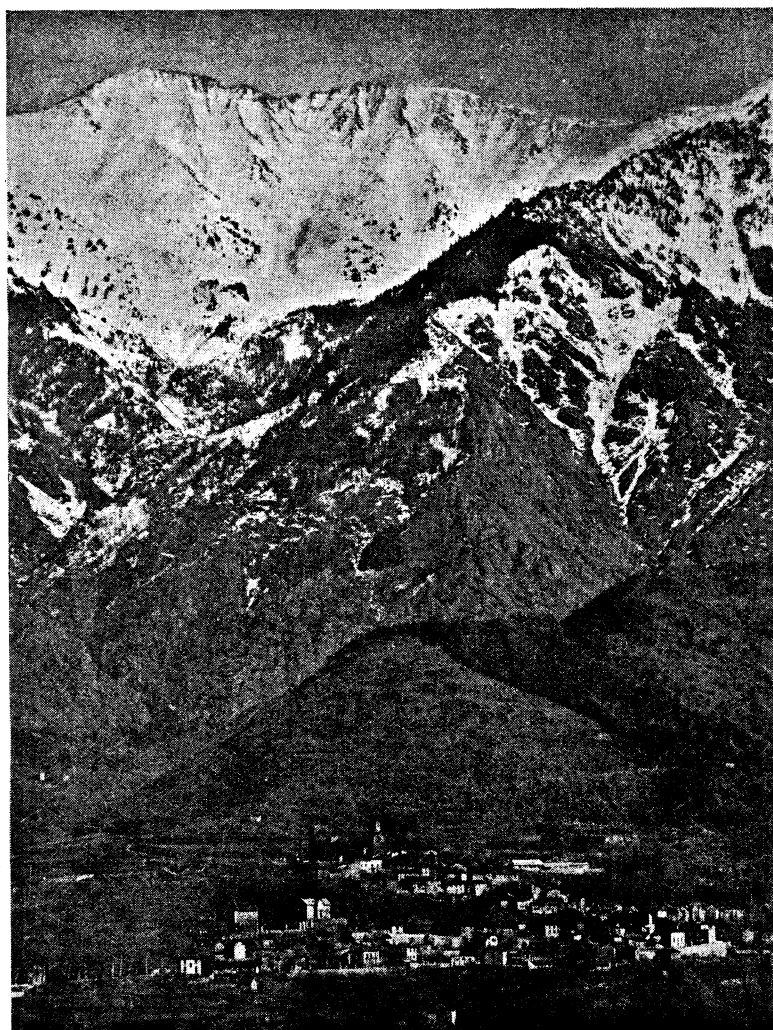
in the early summer! All kinds of lovely feathery grasses starred with every variety of flower. There are great clumps of yellow and pink mallow, scabious in mauve and purple, deep blue cornflowers and burrage, scarlet poppies and enormous white moon daisies, all woven into a coloured carpet and all swaying ever so slightly in the wind.

It looks indeed like a magic carpet woven with every known colour, strangely blended together, which invites you to step on to it and be carried straight into fairyland.

Higher up on the mountain-side, where the meadow land stops, there begins the delicious "mountain rose," or dwarf rhododendron, growing quite low and very close together. It blooms profusely, and in the summer, when it is in full flower, its crimson petals form another carpet, covering the upper slopes for miles and miles; the sun shining on this is a sight which must be seen to be believed. The peasants on the Col d'Aspin aptly call it "the velvet cloak of the hills."

This crimson carpet is moving too, quivering under the heat of the sun, I am told, though I firmly believe it is really the mountain breathing evenly underneath!

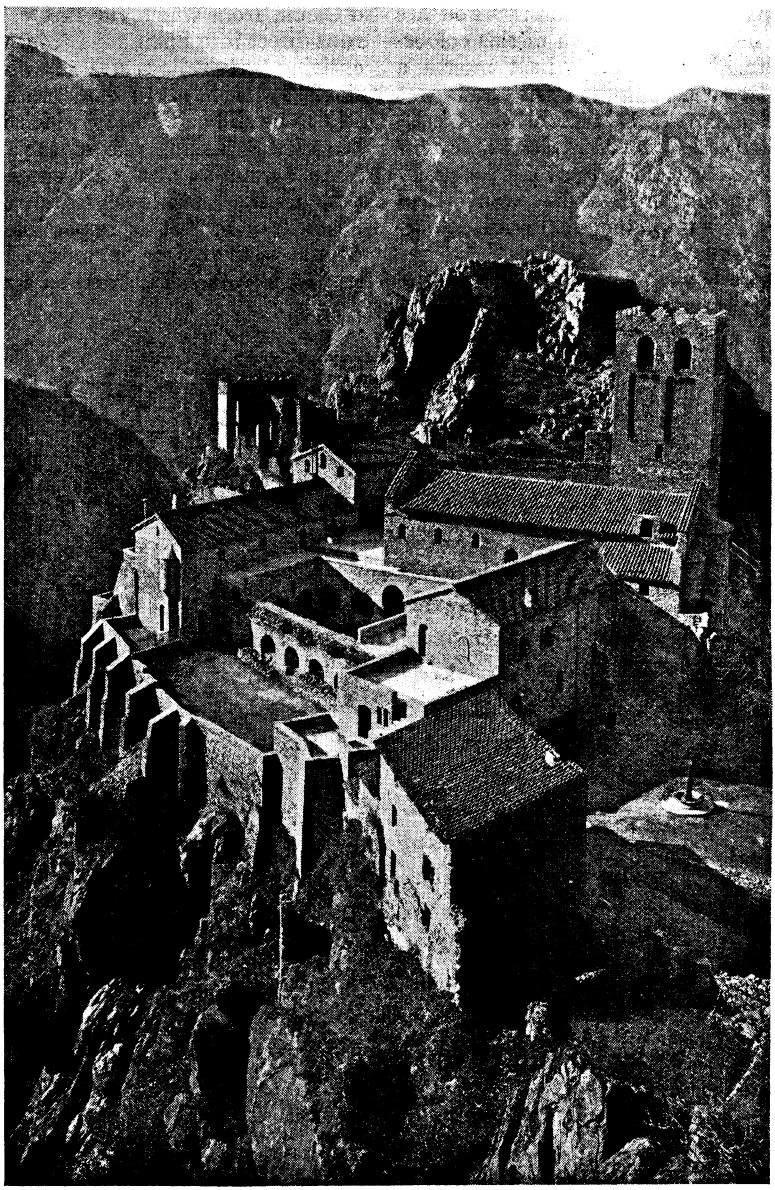
The valleys of the Pyrenees are just as fascinating as the mountains. A few, of



CANIGOU.
One of the giants of the Pyrenees.

course, are shut in, and sombre with rock and forest, as those of Canterets, Eaux Bonnes, and Eaux Chandes; but mostly they are broad, gracious, sunny places, like that delightful valley of the Lavendan, for instance, which stretches away for miles and miles in broad sunny meadows, between the towering hills on either side. Fair, smiling lands are these, with many fruit trees, hayfields, acres of corn and maize.

Yet another fascinating valley is that of Campan, which a poetic writer has called the "most gracious smile of the Pyrenees." This is entirely different from the valley of the Lavendan, for Campan is a park-like country mostly belonging to old landed proprietors, who combine to keep it in its park-like condition. Its broad green fields and lawns, separated by bosky trees and flowering shrubs, are a study in greens of



ST. MARTIN DU CANIGOU.
An old Abbey in the Pyrenees.

every shade and hue. Perhaps it is the background of blue and purple mountain which makes the green of Campan so vivid and arresting. I know not, but never have I realised green in such varied and bewildering shades. One of the inhabitants smiled when I remarked on it to him: "You are not alone in your admiration of this colouring, Madame," he said. "Last month a great artist came from Paris and was astonished at it; he said there was a celebrated blue called Nattier blue, and now he would create the fashion for an equally celebrated green, which he would call Campan green, from the wonderful colouring of this valley."

Then there is the Oloron Valley, with its pleasant foot-hills, warm and sunny and sleepy, and full of clover and red lucerne; the whole long valley of the Aspe (in one of the green glades of which the courtiers of Pau listened to the tales of the Heptameron), the celebrated valley of the Gave d'Ossan, from which the first carriage road runs direct into Spain, and from which other enticing little valleys stretch away on either side. It is hard to enumerate them all: still more difficult to say which is the most beautiful! Asking one of the old curés—himself a native of the Pyrenees—which he thought the most lovely of all the valleys, he answered: "It is impossible to judge: at the side of each mountain is a valley, and each valley has its special charm."

SONG OF SOLITUDE.

ALONE, but not lonely,
The blessed wind only
My kisser, caresser,
My comrade, my friend:
The mountain, the wildwood,
Beloved of my childhood,
My kingdom, my empire,
My world-without-end!

A-riding, a-roaming,
Thro' dawn and thro' gloaming,
By sweet-scented valley,
Or rude mountain keep,
O'er hill and o'er hollow
My wild will I follow
To the brown-brackened brae
Where the laughing rills leap.

Alone, but not lonely,
The sun and wind only
Caressing and kissing
My brow and my hair,
Fore'er, as a child, would
I roam thro' the wildwood,
And live on my lone
By the singing streams there!

LIAM P. CLANCY.

The Guinea Pig

By

Dion Clayton Calthrop

ILLUSTRATED BY S. BRIAULT

CLARENCE and Powis were very young young men. They had been at Eton and Oxford, and still remained beautifully ignorant. They had the same tastes and the same tailor; they had fallen in and out of love with the same girls.

One day Clarence startled his friend by announcing that he was going abroad. "My dear old fellow," he said, "I have decided that I have been living in too much of a groove. I am going to France. I have never crossed the water, as you know, and suddenly I said to myself: 'You are too insular and all that sort of thing; you ought to get to know France.' Well, fortunately I know some French from menus and that sort of thing, so I am going to Monte Carlo. If you believe Phillips Oppenheim, I shall meet there several charming adventuresses and heaps of counts and detectives, and I shall see blanched faces over the gaming-tables. I think 'blanched faces' is rather good, don't you?"

"It is," said Powis. "But if you go now you will miss the Derby and Ascot and the 'Varsity match."

Clarence flung such things aside. "Those," he said, "are the yearly task, *mon Dieu!*"

"That sounds to me really French," said Powis. "Now, touching the little matter of cash, how are you going to do it?"

"I have coaxed a couple of hundred out of my godfather by telling him I wish to improve my mind by carefully studying the French language, with a view to entering the Foreign Office. He asked me rather stuffily if I knew where France was, and when I told him it was south of Brighton, he appeared to be deeply impressed. The old man has never travelled, and he considers that one cannot obtain any of the ordinary necessities of life except wine in France; so he most kindly sent me a cheque, three sets of woollen underclothing, which I at once gave to my housekeeper, some corn-plasters and various medicines. I will write to you, my dear chap, and tell you how I get on. I am taking a couple of hundred of my own, and I shall risk a bit at the tables. Ah! I hear the pleasant sound of the cocktail-shaker."

"I need one badly," said Powis. "I, too, have an announcement to make which is very painful. Here comes Albert, with two large brandy cocktails, I hope. He is very distressed for me. Here's fun, my dear fellow. Now, think of this. My aunt, that very formidable person who once brought me some sweets in a paper bag at Eton—you remember?—has bumped off the deep end, leaving me a couple of thousand a year provided I live for six months in the country, and farm."

Clarence groaned.

"She has also left me a picture, and, in a letter written shortly before her death, she

tells me it is her greatest treasure, and that I must never part with it. Come and see it; it is in my dining-room."

"Oh, my aunt!" cried Clarence when he saw the picture.

"*My* aunt, to be correct," Powis said. "It is a prize pig."

"I guessed it was a pig," said Clarence. "Certainly the frame is massive."

"Do you know," said Powis, head on one side, "it is growing on me. You notice it is standing in some raw salad or something of the sort. I sent for an expert on Art to tell me what it was worth, and he offered me a guinea for the frame, which I refused, of course, and when I told him how my aunt had valued it his reply was rather coarse."

"I like the picture myself," said Clarence, "but the idea of living in the country on a farm for six months is odious."

"I am not too sure," his friend replied. "I shall buy a farm and a cow and a pig and a hen or so—eggs, you know, and pork and milk, and—oh, by the way, how many sheep go to a flock?"

Thought wrinkled Clarence's brow. "I should think two would be a flock, but you will want more than two. You can't do with one in the field and one at the wash, can you?"

SO Powis went to an agent and told him he wanted to buy a farm. The agent looked him over and then produced several flattering pictures of almost unsaleable farms, and asked him what sized farm he required.

"Well," said Powis, "I have not done much farming lately, so I think I will start with a small, easy one."

Then the agent showed him a photograph of a charming old house, standing, as he said, "in its own grounds." And he told him that it was a small place of just over sixty acres.

"Excuse me," said Powis, "but about what size is an acre?"

"About the size of Piccadilly Circus," said the agent hurriedly.

"Sounds to me a deuce of a large farm," said Powis hesitatingly. "But of course I could ride over it."

"Certainly," said the agent. "I have a friend who happens to want to get rid of a horse."

"You are very kind," Powis replied, "but I shall want a horse which is used to the country. I think a town horse might feel very bored without any traffic. Is this farm near a station?"

"About eight miles," said the agent.

"Oh!" cried Powis.

"Nothing in a car," said the agent.

"Of course," Powis replied.

"I have a friend who by chance wants to sell a car," said the agent.

"Thank you so much," said Powis, "but I have two. Is the farm full of animals?"

"No," the agent replied; "it belongs to a lady who was forced to sell everything. I must tell you, sir, that a few repairs may be necessary. I have a friend . . ."

But Powis stopped him. "You are fortunate in having so many friends. How much is this farm?"

"This estate," said the agent, rising and producing whisky-and-soda and cigars from an important-looking safe, "is in the market for fifteen thousand pounds."

"Is it?" said Powis. "Show me something much smaller."

"The lady might take a little less," said the agent.

"Give me the prospectus," said Powis. "I will let you know later."

"Shall we say ten thousand?" the agent kindly suggested.

"I must think it over. Please give me the lady's name and address."

The agent hesitated. "It is not usual . . ." he began; then, seeing the young man rise and search for his hat, he said, "But in this case . . ." Then he wrote on a card, "Miss Dalrymple, Churton House, Great Yawley, South Devon."

"I shall call on you to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock," said Powis.

He then went to his tailor, to whom, curiously enough, he owed nothing. "Good morning, Crawley," he said. "I wonder if you know anything about farms."

"I have a small place of my own," said the tailor.

"I am thinking of buying one," said Powis.

"I have a friend . . ." the tailor began.

"Everybody I meet seems to have a friend who has something to sell to-day," said Powis. "Please glance at this prospectus."

The tailor, who really liked Powis, because he brought him a lot of custom, looked at the prospectus and asked the price.

"Ten thousand," said Powis.

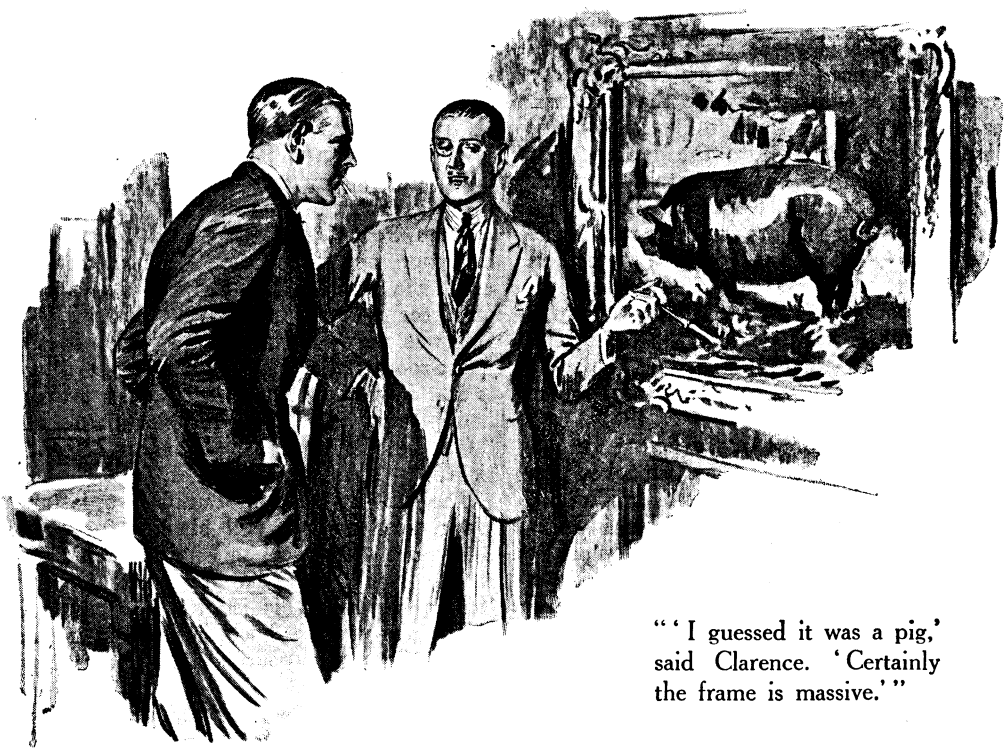
"May I suggest you leave this matter to me, sir?"

"You are very kind, Crawley. Could you see the man to-day?"

"I will make a point of it," said the tailor, with a grim look. "And now, Mr. Powis, you will need some country clothes."

So, before he knew it, Powis had ordered three rough suits and two pairs of riding-breeches, and two blue suits and three flannel suits, and a new country overcoat; and had been hustled off to have boots made to match them.

In the end, Powis proclaimed himself equipped for the country, and certainly the things he was advised to, and did, buy would have served him well both on a Polar expedition and a visit to Central Africa. He did, however, stop short of a motor-launch.



"'I guessed it was a pig,' said Clarence. 'Certainly the frame is massive.'"

SIX vans fully loaded crept their way from London to Great Yawley, bearing, among other things, the picture of the pig. Such repairs as were necessary had already been done, Clarence had had a bibulous send-off to Monte Carlo, and Powis, who had already inspected his property, motored down with his heart rather near his boots.

When you saw Churton House you felt rather as if some stone blessing had descended in a dream garden. On seeing the garden for the first time on a summer evening, bathed in the liquid gold of sunset, Powis experienced a new sensation. He forgot himself as he gazed at the vision of beauty; indeed, he felt terribly new and small, which very much perplexed him.

Through the aid of a kindly aunt, he had engaged three servants and a gardener and boy, and they were on the doorstep ready to meet him. The litter made by the furniture-vans had already been removed, and the furniture placed according to the parlour-maid's taste in the various rooms. Fortunately she had good taste, being the daughter of a dead but eminent scholar who had ruinously invested his capital. Powis was delighted with everything. The gardener had clipped the beautiful yew hedges, redeemed the garden from weeds, and had reglazed and mended and painted the vinery. Powis, on seeing the garden all trim, with its old-fashioned flowers, regretted the seed-catalogue.

After dinner Powis took pencil and paper, and, sitting outside in a comfortable chair, placed on the stone-flagged pathway, jotted down a few ideas. Item: Two cows, twelve

sheep, one dog, two pigs, and . . . his pencil was poised in the air . . . twelve chickens, and twelve ducks for the pond. He toyed with the idea of swans, but remembering they were rather fierce, he scratched out swans, and wrote " geese " instead.

Some days passed before he remembered to unpack the picture of the stout pig. He had spent these days in a dreamy content, strolling about the garden, visiting the orchard, talking to the gardener, and learning to smoke a pipe. The servants could not but like this simple, kind young gentleman who always sent a polite message to the cook about the excellence of the dinner, who promoted, with extra pay, the housemaid to look after his clothes, and who endeared himself to the parlourmaid by presenting a wireless set for the servants' hall. Often the strains of some musical comedy floating out into the garden after dinner would take him back to the life he had lived in town. If one could have seen the heart under the silk vest and soft dress-shirt, one would have seen, at times, an extra heart-beat as Gaby Tolloll's voice proclaimed to the silent stars that she was " but a bit of butter when the right man kissed me." He could almost see the stage and the stalls, and hear the rapturous applause.

It was quite three weeks before he did two momentous things: he unpacked the pig, and he advertised for a milkmaid. Chancing to see the words " Milkmaid Margarine " in the village shop, he thought at once of a beautiful creature seated on a three-legged stool, in the act of producing the delicious beverage from his cows. He inquired of the postman as to whether he knew of a milkmaid not too ill-looking. " I mean," he said, " even a cow has feelings," and the postman, controlling his face, promised to look out for such a person. The cows he had named Ruth and Isabel, after two bovine cousins of his. His dog, whose parentage was doubtful, he had bought from the baker. The dog adored Powis and loathed cats. It was named Bingo, but, in truth, responded to any name. It had liquid brown eyes and a secret sorrow, and it never ran over the flower-beds or snapped at the maids' heels. It was rather like Powis himself.

Then he hung the picture. It was almost a sacred rite. The gardener, mounted on a step-ladder, held the picture up in various places; the maids were summoned to assist; the gardener's boy stood ready with a picture-hanger, brass wire and pinchers. The place selected was over the mantelpiece, and when hung it took on, in a way, the dignity of the house; the glint of the carved gold frame, the exceeding placidity of the pig, the warmth and glow of the varnish, caused Powis to exclaim, " I believe it's an Old Master! " The gardener, who had never heard of a pig as a master, nearly fell off the steps, and, as a matter of fact, Powis was slightly shunned in the village on account of a legend spreading that he had once been the pupil of a pig.

BUT, to travel from the ridiculous to the sublime, a dairymaid presented herself, and, before she could speak, Powis engaged her. It is not often that goddesses drop out of the sky disguised as dairymaids. He pulled himself together with an effort. " Of course, you understand cows and milking, and all that sort of thing? " he said.

" Oh, rather! " she replied.

Then Powis tried very hard to give an imitation of his mother. " The screw—I mean the salary will be sixty pounds a year and beer money," he said. " You will "—this was very embarrassing—" sleep in the guest-room; Matilda will show you where it is. I will touch the bell." His mother had always asked him to touch the bell. " Oh, by the way, have you any credentials? " That sounded right.

The girl at once produced two letters. He glanced at one, and blushed furiously. It began: " My darling Phyllis, aren't you rather mad . . ." He read no further. " I don't think this is one of them," he said. She took it back, looked at it and said: " I'm awfully sorry, sir. This is from an aunt of mine."

" Certainly, certainly," he said. " You are engaged. No followers," he went on, still striving to copy his mother.

" Of course," she replied.

Luckily, Matilda entered the room at this moment. " This is Miss . . . I'm afraid I haven't asked your name."

" Phyllis Smith," she replied.

Powis looked from her to Matilda, and then plunged. " Please show Phyllis to her room—the guest-room," he managed to say. The door closed on them as he sank into a chair.

" She's a lady," he said to himself. " A lady in reduced circumstances. I know what I'll do. Yes, I know what I'll do. She can't possibly eat with the servants. Think of that glorious creature eating eggs

and bacon with Matilda! No." He opened the door and called out, "Matilda." There was a sound of silvery laughter upstairs, and Matilda came down, looking rather flushed.

"Miss Smith will take her meals with me," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Miss Smith is a graduate of St. Cyprian's Agricultural College." He dug up the words from some unknown source. "She is a cow expert—do you follow me? She has a degree in cows and milk and pigs, and all that sort of thing."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that's all," said Powis, conscious of his damp forehead.

"Thank you, sir."

WEEKS passed, weeks of pure, undiluted joy to Powis. He showed himself the simple, honest fellow he was, with real kindness and consideration for everyone with whom he came in contact. To please him, Phyllis pretended even to admire the picture of the pig.

"I feel certain it is by somebody very good," she said at lunch one day.

"I wonder if by chance it's by that chap who painted everybody with red hair," he suggested.

"Titian?" she said, suppressing a laugh.

"That's the chap," said Powis.

"I don't think he was much of a pig-painter," said Phyllis.

"Perhaps you're right," he agreed. "My aunt, who was very particular, thought an awful lot of this picture, you know."

"She certainly bought a beautiful frame for it," said Phyllis.

"I was offered a guinea for the frame," Powis said.

"It's worth far more than that," she said. "It is an old Italian frame of carved wood, and must be worth at least fifty pounds."

"I often wonder why she left it to me," said Powis. "She was a queer old lady; we used to call her the drill sergeant when we were children."

"You have brothers and sisters?"

"I had. Both my brothers were killed in the war, and my sisters died when they were quite young. I was never properly brought up. I mean, I had no home life. I lived with my aunt, who had a passion for hotels. She drank ginger ale and I think it poisoned her outlook on life. I don't think I have ever talked so much to anybody in my life as I do to you. I hope you don't mind?"

"I like it," she said.

"I say, that's really ripping of you. You see, I can't very well talk to the servants, and I don't think the gardener likes me, and the few county people who have called really came for subscriptions, and I detest Women's Institutes. I think woman is an institute in herself, if you follow me."

"I'm ahead of you," said Phyllis.

"Now you are laughing at me," Powis said dejectedly.

She longed to say "my dear infant," but refrained.

Just then a letter was brought in to him. "Do you mind?" he asked.

"Please read it," she answered.

He opened the letter and said eagerly: "It's from Clarence. He's my best friend. He's in Monte Carlo, but he's just coming back. Excuse me. Oh, I say, do you mind if I read it out loud?"

"I should love to hear it."

"'My dear idiot,' he begins. 'I have left the lurid pleasures of this rotten hole with two million francs and a broken heart.' Sounds a bit off, doesn't it?" said Powis.

"I expect your friend will recover," she replied.

Powis continued:

"'She went off with an Argentine with pots of money, so I plunged and kept on winning. Most extraordinary luck. Her name was Theresa; rather dark and awfully expensive to feed. Can you put me up for a couple of weeks? I feel I need country air to cool my heated brow. My broken heart got a bit better after I'd had a couple of cocktails with an American who wanted to borrow some money. Fortunately he was arrested before I lent him any. I was rather annoyed about it, because I heard the detective say, "Al Bunt knows a mug by instinct"—meaning me. I liked your letter about the cows and all that, but I must say I have no passion for wild animals myself, though, as they say over here, "Everybody has his own gout," which really means taste, though you might not think it. The French language is all right, but you have to mince it; but I have learnt a lot of fishes' names and potatoes' names from the menus. *Langouste* or *homard* is a lobster, I forget which—anyhow, it is an enlarged shrimp in armour. There is a girl here called Dolly, who must, I think, be setting up a scent-shop; she always asks for some, and flowers seem to go up in price



"The door opened, and a radiant Phyllis appeared, in a dress of gold."

when she gets inside a shop. Do you mind if I turn up on Thursday? Shove me in anywhere and give me very simple food, because, though the food here is awfully good, I do want a chop and a pint of beer. Do you grow hops? If so, we might make some beer when I arrive. Well, so long until I see you. I will wire you my train. Clarence.'"

Almost directly afterwards, Clarence's wire arrived: "Arrive to-night. Clarence."

"I say," said Powis when he opened it, "this is fine. Clarence is coming to-night. Would you mind telling cook I want her to put her back into the dinner?"

"It sounds rather cannibal," said Phyllis; "but perhaps cook won't mind roasting her back. I must change my room."



"Why?"

"It's the guest-room," said she.

"No, no, no," he said very emphatically. "It's your room. Clarence can sleep anywhere. There's that jolly little room at the end of the passage; he can sleep there. Oh, and I say, we must make a splash of the dinner. I know! Let's have the ordinary dinner, only written in French."

"What a brain!" Phyllis answered. "I shall dine in the servants' hall."

"My dear! Oh, I beg your pardon," cried Powis. "Of course, you must dine with us. It would be so dull without you. Do you know, I don't awfully want Clarence. Is that rather rotten of me?"

"Very," she replied. "Dinner at eight?"

"Yes," said Powis. "I'm going out to pick mushrooms for a savoury. You'll like Clarence tremendously; he's very clever and his hair curls naturally; and his mother is Lady Pott of Pott's Jams, so he's really very well off."

CLARENCE arrived, and was received by his friend.

"My dear man," said Clarence, "this *is*, it really is, bar the fact that there's no moat, it is quite baronial."

"Of course, we are a bit behind the times," said Powis in the manner of a country squire. "There is hot and cold water in every room and all that, and we have domesticated animals, but otherwise this is the heart of the country."

"Ripping," Clarence replied. "Absolutely ripping."

"My milkmaid is dining with us," said Powis casually. "She is a very . . . well, jolly is not the word exactly, but I think you will see she's out of the ordinary run of milkmaids."

"There are milkmaids and milkmaids," said Clarence sagely. "It must be very jolly living in the country like. I suppose all these flowers in the room grow wild in your garden?"

"They do," Powis answered, "under the direction of my gardener. But please don't pluck any; he hates me to pluck the simplest flower, and he chooses my morning buttonhole himself."

Phyllis had not appeared before Clarence went upstairs to dress. At five minutes to eight he found his way to the drawing-room, where Powis was already. On a small table stood three cocktails. "Phyllis will be here in a minute," said Powis.

And then the door opened, and a radiant Phyllis appeared, in a dress of gold. "I hope you had a good journey, Mr. Clarence?" she said, taking the astonished young man's hand. This wonderful, stately creature—a milkmaid! Clarence thought then and there of settling in the country himself.

During dinner Powis became vaguely annoyed. Phyllis addressed all her conversation to his friend.

"Do tell me about Monte Carlo," she asked.

"Well, you see, Miss Smith," he replied, "it's rather difficult to describe. I heard a fellow say once that it was rather like a slum in Paradise."

"I like that," said Phyllis.

"Of course there were some jolly good restaurants, and the tables and a good many doubtful people, and dancing—just the ordinary life, only the air is rather exciting, and the sky is rather Swiss."

"Swiss?" she questioned.

"Like you see on posters—flat blue," he answered.

"Oh, I know," said Phyllis.

"Have you ever been to Switzerland?" Powis asked.

"Lots of times," said Phyllis.

"Of course," said Powis, "there must be lots of milking there, for chocolates and tins and all that."

"Yes," Phyllis replied, smiling. "Have you ever been in Switzerland, Mr. Clarence?"

"I'm afraid not," he said. "I must winter-sport there one day. I say, wouldn't it be jolly if we all went together?"

"No," said Powis, almost crossly.

"I am going to leave you two to your port," said Phyllis, rising. Both men rushed to the door. "Coffee is in the drawing-room," she said.

THE painting of the pig hung over the drawing-room mantelpiece in its massive gilt frame.

"Oh, there's the old pig," said Clarence. "I never noticed it just now. Rotten thing, isn't it, Miss Smith?"

"I rather like it," said Phyllis, to the secret joy of Powis.

"Oh, well," said Clarence, "of course, it may be all right in the country."

The room seemed uncomfortably close, even with the French windows wide open. The air was heavy and there was a feeling of thunder. They got through the evening, but not with great success. Powis, in fact, rarely spoke. He felt that Clarence had somehow destroyed a delightful atmosphere;

but he managed to brighten up when the whisky-and-soda was brought in.

Phyllis left them early.

"Good night, Mr. Clarence," said she. "I have to be up betimes in the morning and go to my work. I have the ducks and chickens and pigs to feed, and the cows to milk, before anyone is up. Good night, Mr. Powis."

"Can I help you in the morning?" asked Clarence eagerly.

"Of course you can't," snapped Powis. "You'd only be in the way."

Phyllis left the room.

"What a ripping girl!" Clarence exclaimed. "What a smile! What eyes! And the way she talks and moves!"

"Have a drink," said Powis.

A certain calm was achieved by the whisky-and-soda and cigarettes, and by twelve o'clock the young men went to bed.

Powis could not sleep; he tossed and turned in bed, haunted by some vague oppression. "Thunder," he thought.

Suddenly the storm burst, crash after crash over the house. Then came one more crash, and Powis, alert, heard the sound of broken china. He was into his dressing-gown in one moment and downstairs the next. There was the pig picture on the floor, among a *débris* of ornaments from the mantelpiece. But, wonder of wonders, the back of the frame was open, and Powis saw that there was a double frame, with a secret place inside.

He knelt down just as Phyllis, looking adorable in her kimono, came in. "Oh, Mr. Powis," she said, "the pig!"

She too knelt down. "Look!" she cried. "Banknotes—stacks of them!"

"Here's a letter," said Powis. He read it over quickly.

"My dear Nephew,

"If you have any sense you will have found out the secret of the awful pig picture. I have simply cheated the Government and its murderous death duties. Use it well. If the country has made a man of you, as I think it will, marry some nice girl and settle down. There are five hundred thousand pounds with your old aunt's love."

"Oh, darling Phyllis, will you marry me?" said Powis. "Say you will, and we'll live here, or anywhere you like."

"I have been deceiving you," she said in a low voice. "My name is Phyllis Dalrymple. I was born in this house, but the other day I was so poor I had to sell it. But when I saw your advertisement I came back. I just had to. The village people swore they wouldn't tell you. Can you ever forgive me?"

"Forgive you, my darling?" said Powis. "Of course I do. And of course I shall give you back this house. Say you love me."

She lifted her face, and across the banknotes and the pig their lips met. The sound of the door being opened made them spring to their feet.

"I thought I heard a noise," said Clarence as he came in.

"Clarence, old chap, you must be my best man. Allow me to introduce you to Miss Dalrymple, who is decent enough to say she'll marry me."

"The very best of luck," said Clarence. "But, I say, look at the pig—and what a lot of waste paper."

"That waste paper, as you call it, is five hundred thousand pounds," said Powis.

"What a price for pork!" said Clarence. "Let's all have a drink."

THE TRAMP'S GRAVE.

NO candles guttered low,
Few prayers were said,
When he was laid to rest
Among the dead.

But over his dark grave
Which bears no name,
There burns the curving moon
Blown as a flame;

And in the uncut grass
A poplar stands,
Upright and motionless
With lifted hands.

AGNES HART.

THE JOLT

By ETHEL M. RADBOURNE

ILLUSTRATED BY INEZ TOPHAM

IT was a charming room—Gilson thought it the library of his dreams. It was the one possession of his friend Farnworth's that roused his envy. Farnworth himself thought it the best room in the house, and was slightly annoyed when the family flocked to it. They were a jovial group, Gilson decided—Farnworth and his wife, Joe and Mildred the son and daughter, Amy Dallington, Joe's fiancée. Summing up the household, Gilson decided that one of the servants must be included. Aldwin, the parlourmaid, went back to the time of Farnworth's marriage.

"A charming house and delightful folk," Gilson summed up. He was down from town for a long week-end and blessed his good fortune. Here in the library he could read a choice book—or doze over it a little.

"Hullo, Gilson! Enjoying literature?"

Gilson came back from his nap with a laugh. "You've caught me, Farnworth. The fact is, this room's soporific. One's brain gets saturated without personal effort."

"An easy road to learning." Farnworth pulled a chair close to Gilson's and lighted a cigarette. "If you're awake I'd like to talk to you."

Gilson detected gravity in his friend's voice and said quickly:

"Some worry, Farnworth?"

"Yes. About Joe. We've had the dickens of a row, he and I."

Gilson felt astonishment and showed it. "You've always struck me as being about the most united clan I've known."

"On the surface," Farnworth conceded. "Underneath Joe and I often strike fire. He's modern and I'm old-fashioned—and we're in business together. That's the case in a nutshell." Farnworth's lips had fallen into determined lines. He was rock, not easily to be moved. "And so long as I'm master I'll govern. I've done pretty well on my own lines." His glance took in the comfort of the room. "I've been able to buy this house and make it what it is. Joe's methods? The young fool wants to ram them down my throat. I'll not have it. Either he conforms—or goes."

Gilson watched his friend with something of dismay. He had the tact to keep silence. Farnworth's temper was better out than in.

"We've had the dickens of a row, as I said—not whispering either. We were out on the terrace for the whole house to hear." Farnworth had the grace to smile wryly.

Farnworth fidgeted in his chair, uttering explosive sentences. Presently he got up and crossed the room to his writing-table. "A business letter or two," he excused himself to Gilson. "Have another doze over your book."

Gilson sat with his back to the writing-table. He adjusted his spectacles and essayed to read, but without interest now in the printed page. Farnworth was evidently set into a deep groove of determination.

"I'm writing to the branch at Addingly," Farnworth said from his corner of the room. "I'm telling them I shall shortly appoint a new manager. Joe can strike off on a line of his own. I'll have my business run as I wish it. I'll write to Bondon, too . . . cut Joe's connection with things entirely."

"Has Joe money?" Gilson ventured.

"His salary," Farnworth said.

"And if that stops?"

"He can sweep crossings till he finds his own level," Farnworth exploded.

Gilson buried himself again in his book. It was better not to rouse Farnworth's ire with questions. Presently Aldwin, the parlourmaid, came to call him to the telephone, and Gilson was left again to solitude. Not for long, though—Mrs. Farnworth opened the library door, saw Gilson, hesitated, then came to his side.

"My husband has been here?"

"A few minutes ago."

"I expect, as you're an old family friend, he was explanatory?"

"He was. He and young Joe had had the dickens of a row, he told me."

Mrs. Farnworth's hands lifted and fell in a movement of dismay. "That's my husband all over. Quick gusts of temper in which he sweeps everything aside. Afterwards——"

"Regret?" Gilson ventured.

She nodded. Gilson saw her glance go to the herring pond isn't ruffled. If you were a semi-stranger we'd have to keep a smooth surface; but as it is we can drop shamming."

Mrs. Farnworth had risen to her feet. She put her hand on Joe's shoulder and half pushed him into the chair she vacated. "Talk to Mr. Gilson. He's level-headed, entirely sane. He'll counsel——"



"'I'm writing to the branch at Addingly,' Farnworth said from his corner of the room. 'I'm telling them I shall shortly appoint a new manager.'"

the writing-table. "Has he been writing letters?"

"Yes. Letters not conducive to Joe's future prosperity, I'm afraid."

She bent close to Gilson's ear. "I wish——" She broke off hurriedly as the door opened and Joe Farnworth came in.

"Having a confidential chat, you two?" Then to Gilson: "There's no need to pretend

"Patience," Joe interpolated. "And I'm out of the article."

"Well, well——" Mrs. Farnworth drifted aimlessly about the room. Presently she slipped out, leaving the two men alone.

"Eyes troubling you still?" Joe asked. "You've not had to wear those things long, have you?"

"No—overstrained eyes." Gilson read-

justed his tortoiseshell rims and stared intently at his companion. "Keep cool, Joe. That's to-day's motto."

"As well ask a stoker to feel shivery," Joe shrugged. He became eloquent for once, with old Gilson for audience. His words hustled on one another's heels. Some of the older generation had no room for the younger . . . they wouldn't allow them initiative . . . they fixed them in grooves . . . change was objectionable to them. . . . "Stay put" was their advice in a nutshell. . . . In the flood-tide of his eloquence he came to a halt as Amy Dallington, his fiancée, went past the library window, swinging her tennis racket. Joe was on his feet in an instant. "Excuse me, I've an appointment," he grinned at Gilson.

Gilson, settling once again to his book, had a fresh interruption. Amy Dallington had tapped on the window to attract his attention. It was a low window, and when Gilson opened it she stepped into the room.

"Just a word. Don't try to pacify Joe. Let him talk. Both he and his father need safety valves. Silence them—and they explode. I've left Joe alone for two minutes to run back to you."

Gilson stepped on to the terrace and walked a few yards with Miss Dallington. She listened to him with half an ear, her hands busy with the braids of her hair.

"I believe I dropped a tortoiseshell pin—a favourite one. I'll run back to the library and have a look."

She was a charming girl, Gilson decided. Straight as a lath, clear-complexioned, and full of character; and, as girls went, sensible. Probably after an afternoon with her Joe's anger would begin to evaporate.

The library seemed the last room for turmoil and unrest. It was decorous with the stored wisdom of ages. Gilson moved from shelf to shelf studying Farnworth's collection. The man was not set in literary grooves at all events, but had a catholic taste. He had culled the best from all nationalities. Gilson picked a volume of Maupassant's and was soon engrossed.

Someone was moving quietly about the room—Millie Farnworth bringing bowls of roses and arranging them on the window seats. She had understanding and called softly to Gilson, "Don't mind me. I'll be silent. I hate to be dragged from a book."

Gilson turned a page or two, then fell to studying Millie Farnworth. She was like her father. Her face in repose fell into the same lines of determination. She had humour, though—and Farnworth lacked it. Probably humour would have been the solution to to-day's puzzle. Once Farnworth and Joe could laugh together——

Laughter to-day seemed as remote as the sun. The storm, already presaged, burst when Farnworth came back to the library. He went to his writing-table and stared at it for a moment of tense silence.

"Gilson," he said abruptly, "have you any of the qualities that go to make a private detective?"

"A few of them, possibly," Gilson smiled.

"Then I'll employ you," Farnworth fumed. "Those letters that were to settle young Joe's hash are missing. I left them here when that business call took me away. Now they've gone." He swung round and came to Gilson's side. "I see through it, of course. Joe's a favourite—everyone on his side. Quietly to burn those letters and let my wrath simmer till it's cool—I can hear the way they'd talk. My wife, Millie, Amy Dallington——"

Gilson looked round for Millie. She was no longer in the room. He could hear her voice on the terrace chatting with Mrs. Farnworth.

Farnworth crossed to the window and called to his wife:

"We'll have tea in the library to-day—the whole clan of us. I've a fancy to see the family in a sweet circle round the fire. Here, Aldwin——" Farnworth strode to the door and intercepted the parlourmaid on her way to the drawing-room. "We'll have tea in here to-day."

Gilson had a moment's amusement as he watched Aldwin. She was decorous to her finger-tips, the last word in parlourmaids. But she was also an old family institution. It was evident that she felt the electrical state of the atmosphere. Gilson thought her a shade less perfect in her movements. She even committed the indiscretion of clinking two cups together. The sound of the impact came almost startlingly into the heavy stillness of the room.

Farnworth to-day was in an impish mood. He feigned levity; he even tossed off a few jokes. Then abruptly he flung his challenge into the circle.

"We're here together, the lot of us—including Gilson. I've asked him to take on the part of private detective. He's stuck pretty close to the library this afternoon. As likely as not he knows which of you is light-fingered."

"My dear George," Mrs. Farnworth protested.

Farnworth ignored her, speaking with precision. "This afternoon I wrote two letters that were to settle Joe's hash for him. Say they were fences, shutting him out of the business. I'd barely finished them when I was called off to a telephone message, and then a man called on business. I left both letters on the writing-table. When I came back they were gone." Farnworth's eye went round the circle. "Here's the whole family for you to pick from, Gilson."

Gilson's glance went from one to the other, shrewd and observant. They were taking Farnworth's ire fairly calmly. A man in a rage has to be taken with a grain of salt.

Gilson hesitated, then bent quickly forward in his chair. "We're all friends, eh? We're making inquiries in the right spirit?" He permitted himself a smile for his new rôle. "I never expected to do detective work. But this afternoon——" He paused effectively, emptied his tea-cup, and handed it to Mrs. Farnworth to be refilled.

"This afternoon you saw somebody take my letters?" Farnworth exploded.

"Yes," Gilson nodded. "I did."

It was inevitable that there should be something intense in the silence that followed Gilson's announcement. Even Farnworth choked back an ejaculatory phrase.

Gilson began to speak again in measured sentences. "Let's admit that everybody in the room would have the desire to destroy those letters—except the writer of them."

"And yourself," Farnworth interpolated. "I suppose you're not the guilty party?"

"No," Gilson smiled, "I'm not. But there remain—Joe's mother, Joe's sister, Joe's fiancée, Joe himself. There are four people hot on your trail, Farnworth."

Farnworth's ill-humour was beginning to evaporate. He permitted himself to grin at Gilson's manner.

"You've made an interesting start, Gilson. Yes, I follow you. Four people hot on my trail—well phrased."

Gilson pushed his cup aside and spoke rapidly. "Really, Farnworth, it's stuff for a novelette. The young man's mother, heartbroken; his sister, the playmate of his youth; his fiancée, looking forward to the marriage day and a home; the young man himself, with his hopes fallen to the dust——"

"It's a capital instalment," Joe murmured. "They'll buy the next number." Then quickly: "But this is reality, not fiction. One of us has been accused." He stared hotly from Farnworth to Gilson.

Gilson spread his hands in a deprecatory gesture. "Softly—and slowly. It's a weighty matter we're discussing. Weighty ——" He glanced round the book-lined walls of the room. "Let's see what literature can do to help us."

Joe sprang from his chair. "I find this jesting intolerable."

"Fiddling while Rome burns," Amy Dallington suggested. She turned suddenly to Farnworth. "I want to say one thing. I'm glad the letters were taken. They were not worthy of you."

Gilson's voice swung peremptorily into a buzz of talk that followed Amy Dallington's remark.

"The only person who has been alone in the room this afternoon is Miss Dallington."

"Mr. Gilson came out on to the terrace with me," Amy admitted, "and I ran back to pick up a lost hairpin."

"I guessed as much," Farnworth said. "Well, I suppose a girl in love will do anything."

"Nevertheless, Miss Dallington is not the culprit," Gilson said. "Remember I saw the letters taken from the desk."

Gilson was deliberate now in his silence. His eyes went shrewdly from one to the other. Like himself they would be re-acting the afternoon's events. Mrs. Farnworth had come into the library shortly after Farnworth had gone to the telephone. She had stayed a few minutes after Joe came. Then Joe had had a short time in the room talking to Gilson. Then Amy Dallington . . . then Millie, drifting from side to side of the library arranging her roses. Gilson, watching them all, saw each re-enacting his or her part in the afternoon's happenings.

"Joe, get me a book from the top shelf, nearest the fireplace," Gilson suddenly said. "Oliver Wendell Holmes' *Guardian Angel*. Shall I read a few sentences aloud—or do you remember the old man who saw what took place behind him by careful adjustment of his spectacles?" Gilson adjusted his and settled in his chair with his back to the writing-table. "That was the angle. I saw clearly the one who took the letters. Someone picked them up neatly and hid them about his or her person."

Farnworth bent forward and touched his wife's hand. "You shouldn't have done it. But I suppose a mother goes to any length to protect her young."

"Mrs. Farnworth didn't take the letters,"

Gilson said slowly. "The circle narrows. Not Miss Dallington. Not Mrs. Farnworth."

"Either Joe or Millie, then. They always stuck together. Millie, probably—she'd use those rose-bowls as a blind."

have forgiven the women, thought them weak fools merely. But *Joe*——"

"Not Joe," Gilson said quietly.

He had their attention now, keen-edged. They were audience to his every gesture.



"'Is it these you're wanting?' she asked quietly."

"Not Millie," Gilson cheerfully eliminated.

"Then—Joe?" The sheer pain of Farnworth's voice brought a new atmosphere into the room. "Not *Joe*? Somehow I could

His moment of stillness held them enmeshed.

"Can't you guess?" Gilson asked presently. "Only one other person has been

in the room this afternoon. You can't guess ? Well, then, I'll show you." Gilson crossed to the bell-push and pressed it. " You'd like the tea-things taken away ? " he asked Mrs. Farnworth. " Ah, here's Aldwin."



They were all staring at her, dismayed. She stood there deft and capable, prim and decorous, the perfect flower of house-parlour-maids.

Aldwin's glance went from one to the other of the circle. The immobility of her expression altered. She seemed in a moment to become younger, subtly changed from moving statue to warm flesh. Her hands went to her dress pocket and pulled out two letters.

" Is it these you're wanting ? " she asked quietly.

For the moment she dominated them all. She held the others as playthings in the cup of her palms. Her voice lifted and hurried.

" Yes, I took them ; after I'd fetched

master to the telephone. The desk needed dusting," she smiled. "I've been here since Master Joe was born. I love him near as well as Mrs. Farnworth herself. There's nobody like him. I've washed and nursed him, and mended his clothes. I'd stand between him and a blizzard if it came along."

Nobody laughed. The ludicrous was swallowed up by reality. Aldwin the parlourmaid was like some accusing figure of wrath, facing Mr. Farnworth.

"I heard all the row—who could help it? You and Master Joe were out on the terrace and I was in the dining-room setting lunch. Then I was in the hall when you were talking loud to Mr. Gilson about the letters you'd write. I'm not deaf—and if folks shout——"

They were still spellbound. The incredible was happening. It reached climax when Aldwin quietly stepped to the fire and laid the letters on the flame. They shrivelled, blackened, fell into nothingness. . . .

"You'll accept my month's notice?" Aldwin said to Mrs. Farnworth. The next sound was the quiet closing of the door as she left the room.

Farnworth broke silence first. "Aldwin—of all amazing things. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings——"

"Aldwin, of all people," Mrs. Farnworth marvelled.

"She's taken our family chariot and given it a good old jolt," Joe summed up.

"A jolt?" Farnworth stared at his son. "A *jolt*. You're right, Joe. Out of the ruts—— Well, well, I suppose I've to bow to superior wisdom—*Aldwin's*. Possibly there may be a way out; some niche in the firm where you can play about as you like. I suppose if ever we're to come to terms, its right now whilst we're jolted out of ruts for a spell."

Farnworth crossed to the bell and rang it. When Aldwin came in response, he frowned at her, then suddenly laughed.

"We're taking no month's notice," Farnworth said. "But if a rise in salary would oil the wheels a little——"

"I thank you, sir," Aldwin said primly.

A FRIENDLY CALL.

AT the end of the lane is a cottage
With a deep warm roof of thatch,
With four little walls of whitewash
And a door with an old iron latch;
Sometimes in the Spring I go there
When the catkins nod on the tree,
Up the worn brick path to the doorway
That is ever ajar for me.

I stand on the step in the sunshine
For a welcome warm and rare,
My hostess says "Be seated,"
And dusts the Windsor chair;
Then we sit in the red-flagged kitchen
And we talk, just she and I,
Of the day, of the bees and poultry,
And how the world wags by.

And as I sit by the window
And look at the tree-clad hill,
At the pot of nodding tulips
On the spotless window-sill,
At the motes that dance in the sunshine,
And the curtains white as snow,
I wish that I could dwell there,
And need not ever go.

DOROTHY DICKINSON.

The Turn of the Wheel

By J. J. Bell

ILLUSTRATED BY TOM PEDDIE

Author of "Wee Macgreegor," "Gambler's Hope," etc.

MR. CULROSS, stationmaster at Blarrour, passed from the platform to the trim, stoutly built, white-washed cottage that was his home, and looked in at the open window of the sitting-room.

"Oh, you are there, Anna!" he said in his soft West Highland voice to a girl who had evidently just finished lacing a pair of high brown boots. "I was afraid you might have started for the hill."

"I had a lazy turn after your good Highland breakfast," she replied; "but I'm really going to start now." And she got up from the old mahogany and horsehair sofa, a rather tall, finely formed young woman, with dark bobbed hair, dark grey eyes, a countenance which was less a combination of charms than a charm in itself, and a colouring too pale to belong to that region of moorland and mountain, thirteen hundred feet above the sea.

"I do not like to be spoiling your morning, Anna," he said; "but since ye are still here, maybe ye would be doing me a favour. There has been a fall of rock about a mile down the line—not on the line, but near it—and I want to see for myself if it will be dangerous-like. So if you would be taking charge at the station, just for an hour——"

"Certainly, Uncle Charlie! But what about Willie?" She referred to the one and only porter, who was also signalman.

"I sent him down to warn the goods train that is near due. I would ask your auntie, only she is not liking the telegraph."

"But you hardly ever get a telegram here, or send one."

"We have been receiving two a day since the middle of last month, and despatching two; and some of them was as long as a chapter in the Old Testament, and as full of queer names as you could read there, with yards of figures into the bargain. Oh, ay; we have been very busy with the telegraph."

"Sounds like Stock Exchange messages. Who about Blarrour bothers about the Stock Exchange? Oh, I ought not to have asked that!"

"Ah, well, you are bound to learn when you receive the wire for him. It is the young fellow you would notice speaking to me, when you came off the train last night."

"Why should you think I noticed him?" said Anna, whose somewhat critical eye had not disapproved of the well-set-up, but not too cheerful-looking, young man in the grey-blue Harris tweeds.

"Well, maybe you did not notice him. But he noticed you," returned the stationmaster, with a chuckle. "We do not see silk stockings on Blarrour platform every afternoon. I told him you were my niece, come all the road from London for her holiday—and then I had to leave him, to attend to the train. But you will be seeing him about eleven o'clock, when he will be coming for his wire, and his letters and newspapers."

"Where does he come from—I mean, where is he staying here?"

"At the Loch House, four miles over yonder. His brother that paints pictures took the House for six weeks, but on his first day he fell off a rock and hurt himself very badly; and so the young man you will be seeing

soon came from London to keep him company. His name—the young one's—is Mr. Alan Thornton, and a very nice-spoken gentleman he is. He——"

"He must be a perfect nuisance," remarked Anna. "Two wires a day at Blarrour! No wonder you want to escape! However, I'll attend to him, and the sooner you're away, Uncle Charlie, the sooner you'll be back. It's not nearly eleven yet, but I'll come over to the station with you now, and you can show me what I may have to do."

"Everything is in the office," said Mr. Culross, who, in addition to being stationmaster, was postmaster, newsagent, coal merchant and several other things.

Blarrour was not even a village. Surveyed from the platform, or train, it had only one visible dwelling besides the station house, the grey stone house of a shepherd perched bleakly upon a heathery, grassy knoll. For the rest, it was a vast expanse of heaving moor, boulder-strewn, dangerously boggy, a study in sad-coloured browns most of the year, but now ruddy and purple; the beauty of desolation amid austere mountains and rugged peaks. To an ordinary city dweller an unattractive place in summer, and a dreadful one in winter, when the coupled engines ploughed through the drifts against a yelling blizzard; but to Culross and his wife it was the home of nearly thirty years, which they would not readily leave for any sort of worldly promotion. Their children had gone out into the world, but they would remain, and gladly, till that sorry day when, having attained the regulation age-limit, Culross would perforce relinquish his little monarchy to a younger stationmaster.

IN the office Anna was taking off the conclusion of a long message when Alan Thornton tapped on the open door and came in. From the corner of her eye she saw his expression, which seemed to her that of suspense, change to that of surprise. She went on with her duty, and he did not interrupt her. His letters and newspapers lay ready on the counter, but he did not touch them. Standing there, cap in hand, he presented a likeable enough figure of young manhood, neither fair nor dark, with finely-cut features; his blue-grey eyes looking out of a clean-shaven, tanned countenance—honest eyes, though not happy at



"'Well, maybe you did not notice him. But he noticed you,' returned the stationmaster, with a chuckle."

the moment; his lips set with a firmness that suggested determination—or maybe stubbornness.

Presently she tore off the four sheets containing the message in her clear, business-like writing, and got up.

"Good morning," he said, with a sudden smile.



"Good morning," she gravely replied; and briefly explained the stationmaster's absence. "I hope I have not made blunders," she added, handing over the sheets. "It is two years since I touched the key. You know, of course, that you can have the message repeated, at half price."

"From watching you, those few moments, I should say you were an expert," he said.

"It happens," she returned, rather coldly, "that my daily work is in a post-office." Without giving him time to make a remark, she continued: "Here are forms, if you wish to send a reply. I shall be on the platform till Mr. Culross comes back."

He watched her go out—she had a proud way of carrying herself—and then his gaze went swiftly to the message. Its significance was plain enough to him, whatever it might have been to the old stationmaster. The queer words were the names of shares in which the speculating public had been rabidly interested for more than a year; the figures were the opening prices on the London Stock Exchange that morning. As he scanned them his brow cleared. It seemed to him that the market was at last steadying, after a week of wild movements, mostly downwards; that, indeed, the rise had been resumed. If that were so, he had no time to waste. He must instruct his brokers forthwith. Some rapid calculations, a glance at the financial pages of two newspapers, and he proceeded to fill a couple of telegraph forms. That done, he went out to find the telegraphist.

She had just turned at the far end of the platform, and was coming towards him. Despite a supreme interest in his own affairs just then, he was aware of a sense of admiration. By her air, no less than her movements, she represented freedom, freedom of spirit, it seemed to him, as much as of body; for with all her lithesomeness she did not obviously suggest the sports girl.

"If you please," he said, handing her the forms.

She read them over, then pointed to a figure, asking whether it was a "7" or a "9".

"Nine, Miss Culross."

"Thanks. Well, Mr. Thornton, there's no need for you to wait. You can settle with my uncle later. Good morn——"

"But, if you don't mind, I've one or two other wires—shorter ones—to send. I thought I'd write them while you were getting off that one. It's rather urgent."

"Oh, very well," she said, and led the way to the office.

While she tapped off his message to the stockbrokers, he addressed a form, and wrote:

"Leaving for London to-night. Do not . . ."

Pausing, he stood watching her. . . . And, suddenly, something seemed to move in his heart. . . .

When she got up and came to the counter, holding out her hand for the message, he said :

" Forgive me, but I've decided to delay sending the others. Can't I pay for the one just gone ? " He crumpled up the form and tossed it into a basket under the station-master's desk.

" Oh, certainly," she replied, and named the amount due.

She was not encouraging, and abruptly he felt that there was nothing more that might be said. But as he was about to depart, the stationmaster came in.

" There was no danger to the line, after all, Anna, and I need not have been spoiling your morning," remarked Mr. Culross. " And have you attended to Mr. Thornton ? "

It was the young man who answered. " Yes—and I'm afraid it is I who have spoiled the morning for Miss Culross." An instant's pause. " Mr. Culross, will you present me to your niece ? "

For a moment the stationmaster looked puzzled ; then—" Ay, ay, of course ! Anna, this is Mr. Alan Thornton ; Mr. Thornton, this is Miss Culross, the daughter of my brother, the late Reverend John Culross, M.A., B.D. And now you will be knowing each other quite well."

There was a brief flicker of amusement on the pretty mouth of Miss Anna Culross, but not much warmth in her " How d'you do ? " and handshake ; and immediately after the introduction, with a polite nod to Alan, and a word to her uncle, she left them.

" Ah, Mr. Thornton," said the station-master, with a wag of his head, " that is a clever lass, and a good one. I could be telling you plenty of wonderful things about her. But maybe she would not like it." He took out his pipe.

Alan lit a cigarette. " I understood you to say that she had lost her father, your brother, Mr. Culross. Was it recently ? "

Mr. Culross shook his head. " My brother was a great man, and would have been a very great man, if he had been spared. I am not ashamed of any of my father's family—working folk like myself—but I am always proud of my brother, John. My brother went through the University without costing my father a penny, and soon after he was finished people were saying he was going to be the greatest preacher in Scotland. He married a lady—not a rich lady, but a fine one—and when Anna was born, we all said, ' What a lucky child ! ' And so she was, till she was twelve years old. And then, one day, her father and mother went on a journey in a motor-bus—motor-buses were new things then—and there was an accident—and they were both killed. . . . Well, Mr. Thornton, I am not going to speak of my brother's affairs, nor of Anna's, but I will tell you that Anna was not left to be a burden to anybody. There was enough to keep her very comfortable all her life. But as soon as she was old enough she began to earn her living, and for some years now she has been living on what she earns in the post-office. I cannot tell you what she does with her other money, except—and I am telling you, because you must not be thinking she is a miser—except that she has made a doctor of my eldest son, and set up my sister's two daughters in a fine little business." Mr. Culross struck a match. " So you see, Mr. Thornton, she is a clever lass, and a good one, too."

Alan, regarding his cigarette, said : " Miss Culross struck me as being admirably independent."

" Oh, yes, she is all that ! And her aunt and I do not always like it, for, naturally, we sometimes want to be doing little things for her."

" Is she a Socialist, Mr. Culross ? "

The stationmaster laughed. " No, no ; I would not be calling her a Socialist. I do not know what she is. But I do know that she has very high principles about many things. Well, well ! I am keeping you back with my chat. How is your brother this morning ? "

" Just about all right, thanks. He does not really need me now."

" Then—what a pity !—you will be leaving us, for you must be wanting to get back to your business in London. Ah, well, I will be missing your calls at the station, Mr. Thornton. Yesterday, you were saying you might be travelling this evening. Do you wish me to wire to Fort William to reserve a berth in the sleeper ? "

Alan hesitated. Why should he stay longer ? Save for his brother's sake, he would never have set foot in a place so remote, so dull, so altogether inconvenient. There was, he admitted, something singularly attractive about the girl, but her manner had been unfriendly enough to stir his resentment. Why should he linger ?

Yet he answered : " Thanks, Mr. Culross ; but I shan't be leaving this evening, anyway. I'll give you a day's notice when I decide."

They went out together to the platform. The stationmaster pointed to the entrance.

"But where is your car?"

Alan smiled. "I'm afraid it's feeling the effects of that remarkable road of yours, and I'm giving it a rest. To tell the truth, there are bits of that road I don't love myself. In the dusk, last night, I nearly missed that bad turn above the burn."

"Ay, you must be very careful! And will you be walking over again in the afternoon?"

"Yes; I'm expecting the usual wire."

"Then, Mr. Thornton, you must come to the house, and the wife will be proud to give you a cup of tea. It will be a warm, dusty tramp for you in this fine weather."

Alan did not refuse.

Twenty minutes later, walking through the glen that led to the Loch House, he spied the girl. She was lying on a patch of heather, so far up the mountain-side that he could only surmise that she was reading. Greatly daring, he raised his cap and waved his hand. After a moment he saw her arm go up and fall. He felt that her response was perfunctory; still, it was better than none.

But if, as he approached the station-house in the afternoon, he hoped to meet here there, he was asking for disappointment.

Said the hospitable Mrs. Culross, who as a hostess would have drawn no distinction between a peer and a porter:

"Anna took a wee picnic with her, so we are not expecting to see her till she comes. Maybe you will be thinking it queer, Mr. Thornton, that a young lass like her was taking her holidays at the back o' beyond; but she was doing it for four years now. Last year she brought a friend, and on the third day her friend was taking the morning train for the South——"

"For Blackpool," put in Mr. Culross. "I suppose most of the London young folk cannot be sitting still at any time; but our Anna declares she can just manage to live without the dancing for two weeks out of the fifty-two. Well, it would be a bad job for her old uncle and auntie if she was thinking different. And there will be another thing about Anna, Mr. Thornton——"

"Come, come, Mr. Thornton," cried the hostess, "you are eating nothing at all, at all!"

Alan, already heavy laden with scones and pancakes, took another pancake and begged his host to continue. . . .

Before long, however, it was time to go over to the station. The telegram with the day's closing prices would be coming through. As he waited, doubt came back like a cloud; suspense chilled him. What had happened in the Stock markets since morning? Had he snatched at a false hope, and done the wrong thing again?

At last the message was in his hand, but seconds ticked away ere he found the nerve to read it. . . . Thank God! Even better than he could have thought possible. The "bulls" had evidently regained control. The boom was in progress once more.

Not so many hours ago Alan Thornton had passed into the glen, as into the gloom of impending disaster. Now he entered it, rejoicing in the September sunshine, shaken, no doubt, by the reaction, but uplifted almost to the point of exaltation.

Turning a sharp bend, he came abruptly upon the girl—nearly ran into her. Both came to a halt. Without preface, he said:

"Miss Culross, is there any good reason why you should be unfriendly?"

"Unfriendly!" She regarded him steadily, and it may have been that she saw—and read aright—the new lights in his eyes.

"Perhaps I should say," he said quickly, "unwilling to be friendly?"

"Is that quite the same thing?" Her tone was cool, yet not unkind. "But I assure you," she said calmly, "that I am not unfriendly—and I can give two good reasons why you should believe me. My uncle likes you, and——" She hesitated.

"And the other reason?"

"Oh, it is simply that I do not know you."

"That," he said stolidly, "is not my fault, Miss Culross."

She did not answer, but a smile flickered.

"Is it any recommendation that, an hour ago, your aunt should have received me kindly and treated me to a royal tea?"

She was not surprised. "From the hill I saw you go into the house."

"Was that why you did not come home?"

"Oh, no. I wanted tea pretty badly, but I could not have got down more quickly. There are some difficult bits up yonder."

"You must be wanting tea still more badly now. May I walk back with you?"

Again her dark grey eyes met his steadily. "It's best to be honest, Mr. Thornton," she said, "and I'll tell you exactly what I think. I think that you and I would disagree on too many things. That's all."

"Thank you," he said quietly. "And, in the meantime, may I walk back with you?"

Next moment they were smiling at each other.

And so it began.

Later in the evening, after the South-bound train had gone, her uncle came to her, smoothing out a telegraph form.

"Here is a very queer thing, Anna. It was lying on the top of the basket, and I was going to clean my pipe with it, when I saw the writing, and——"

"Mr. Thornton changed his mind about sending it, Uncle Charlie."

"Ay, ay—but what made him change his mind?"

"Surely that is no business of ours."

"A very true observation, Anna. Still, I was wondering! Maybe it would be something in the wire he got this morning. What do you think?"

"Oh, very likely," said Anna brusquely, for she was wondering too.

AND so it went on.

With the beginning of the second week of their acquaintance Alan took to spending the day at Blarrour, coming over in time for his morning telegram, and remaining till six o'clock, or a little later. Sometimes Anna attended to the telegraphic business, but you would have suspected that she did so to oblige her uncle. At such times she became aloof in her manner, treating the young man as a stranger. Alan did not like it, but was fain to put it down to her post-office training.

Otherwise she was friendly, admitting frankly—too frankly, perhaps—that she liked having his company on her excursions among the mountains. The weather, as often happens up there in September, held fine—Summer lingering in the sunshine, Autumn stirring in the shade. They picnicked—taking turns as providers—in strange, remote places, where peace breathed on ruggedness, and beauty peeped from barrenness. On the warm heather, with its faint fragrance and the bog-myrtle's sweetening the strong, pure air, talking or silent, they lay within touch, alone in the world. Yet, however friendly her eyes and voice, Alan felt as though the world lay between them. Some instinct told him that to put out his hand and lay it on hers would be to end it all. And he was now truly in love with her.

On the afternoon which was to be their last, though he did not then know it, in the mountains, he said:

"After all, we have not disagreed on so many things—have we?"

"No—only on enough to make it interesting," she answered, smiling. With her woman's wit she had, during those recent days, steered the talk past a good many rocks.

"If I may say it," he said, smiling also, but sadly, "you are a very impersonal person."

"I suppose I am. And yet I seem to have told you quite a lot about myself."

"You have told me—thank you!—about what you do—I know about your work in the post-office, your keenness for dancing and tennis, the plays you like, the books you read. . . . But I know nothing at all of what you think."

"Perhaps that is why we have disagreed so little!"

Quickly he returned: "There may be worse things than disagreements. Disagreements may lead to understandings."

"Quite true—but, please, don't let us get philosophical." She smiled again, but not with her eyes. He had come close, as it were, to the barrier, the barrier she had set up at the beginning; never before had he come so close. Hitherto she had felt safe, because she had been sure of its strength, its solidity; now she was not quite so sure.

With an effort at lightness, he asked: "Why shouldn't we get philosophical? It would be going in the opposite direction of sentiment—wouldn't it?"

"We have not been moving in that direction, have we?" she said coldly, and thought she had checked him.

But presently he glanced up, saying: "Miss Culross, won't you tell me just what is your philosophy of life?"

Under the lovely tan of her neck and cheek was born a glow. Perhaps she was angry with him; perhaps with herself too; for she was reflecting that she ought never to have allowed this friendship to begin.

"I will tell you one thing about it, Mr. Thornton," she said. "My philosophy of life is not yours." And she looked at the watch on her wrist.

"It's not time yet!" he pleaded.

"That depends!" The pretty mouth went up at the corners.

Alan laughed in spite of himself. "You do regulate the conversation, don't you?" he said. "Do you know, you have never let me tell you anything about myself?"

"I know," she answered quietly, feeling that she was in control again. "If you will offer me a cigarette and smoke one yourself, possibly we may discover a subject agreeable

to us both." She tried to look prim, and succeeded in looking adorable.

Alan withdrew from the barrier; but he assured himself that on the morrow he would break it down, whatever the result.

On the way home, an hour later, Anna was rather silent. She had expected to have a fight with herself, but it was much harder than she could have imagined. Not till they were nearing the station-house could she claim victory. And the victory gave her no joy.

"Couldn't we start earlier to-morrow?" said Alan. "The morning wire doesn't matter."

"I'm afraid," she replied deliberately, "I can't start at all. You see, it's my last day at Blarrour, and I must spend it with my aunt."

Had she looked at him then she might have been even sorrier than she was.

"Do you mean," he said at last, "that I am not to see you to-morrow? Your train does not leave till near six."

She hardened her heart and answered smoothly: "Why not come to the house at tea-time—five o'clock? Auntie would be delighted to see you. She enjoyed your last visit. Then, if you like, you can see me off."

"May I travel with you?" cried Hope.

"Please, no, Mr. Thornton. I know you have made your plans to travel with your brother, on the following night."

They were now at the house. There was a pallor under his sunburn.

"Anna, there is something I must say to you before you go. Will you give me the chance now?"

She did not affect to resent the use of her name. She said: "Have you forgotten that there is a wire waiting for you over at the office?"

"That matters nothing! Will you take a very short walk with me now, and will you be so—so just as to let me speak?"

Had he used any other word he must have failed; but if there was one thing that Anna Culross believed herself to be, it was "just."

"Very well," she replied. To herself she was saying: "I've been a fool, but I need not be a coward."

They went up the road a little way, turned a bend, and sat down on the heather. He did not dally.

"Anna," he began, "I love you better than anything, and I know you do not love me at all. But you mean so much to me, that I cannot simply say 'good-bye' and see you go out of my life. I'm not going to ask you if there is someone else. I'll admit that I had not known you for ten minutes before I looked at your left hand, and was glad to see no ring there—not that no ring proves anything. Still, I felt like a man who is not actually forbidden; and as the days went on I began to dream that I had at least the right to love you. But, lately, you have made me fancy there was something standing between us; something that, even if you could care a little, would still be there. And now I'm convinced that there is something. . . . Anna, can you tell me what it is? And is there nothing I can do to remove it?"

Downcast, she shook her head. "I'm very sorry," she murmured. "I thought you would understand that it would be friendliness, and no more."

"You certainly did your best to make me so understand it. But, you see, I loved you, and had to take your company on any terms. Do you know," he went on, with the ghost of a smile, "I've been regarding you as the girl who brought me good fortune. The day before I met you, I was as near to ruin as a man could be. That first wire you gave me was the turning point. This morning—I know such things don't impress you, and I'm mentioning it only as a matter of fact—this morning I could call myself worth fifty thousand pounds."

She nodded.

"You knew!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, not in figures! But, as you are aware, I have seen some of your wires, and I read the papers. For years I've read the Stock Exchange News. I can't think why I began it, but I got interested in watching things go up and down, and picturing the people who made fortunes—and lost them. At one time many Stock Exchange wires passed through my hands and—— But why talk about it?"

"So you knew I was speculating?"

Her voice was gentle. "Why not give it the honest name, Mr. Thornton—gambling?"

There was a pause till he said: "So you disapprove of—gambling?"

"Disapprove!" It was as though the word had roused her. "I detest it!"

His look expressed hurt amazement rather than resentment.

"Forgive me being savage," she said, "and don't think it's because I'm a minister's daughter. Nothing of the sort! It's only because I happen to have some imagination. There are two ways of getting

money without earning it. One is dishonesty, the other is gambling, and both are lowering to the people who use them; both bring ugliness into the world. As a business man, you may tell me that speculation is in everything to-day; that the world cannot go on without it. But that is not quite the same thing as this craziness of able-bodied people for getting riches without working."

"They worry plenty!" he put in grimly.

"Which ought to show them the folly of it. Besides, they nearly all lose in the end! Worry! Of course they worry! Mr. Thornton, that first morning I saw you, you were in a fever!"

"And you despised me?"

"No—but I thought you were a—a fool, and was sorry for you—you, a strong, healthy man, spending your mind on such a silly game, tormenting yourself, and the devil laughing at you all the time! I confess I wondered what your proper occupation was."

"I have had no occupation for three years," he said. "Let me show myself up, Anna. Until three years ago, I was in business with my father. Then I discovered that from speculation—or, as you say, gambling—I could make more in a week than from business in a year. My father and I were good friends, and I didn't keep the thing a secret. But my father would not have a speculator in the business, and said I must choose one thing or the other. I shook his hand and went out of the business."

"Oh, you silly boy!" she cried—and blushed.

"Don't be too severe," he said, reddening also. "Like other men, like most men, I wanted to make a fortune—and, at last, after some ups and downs, I have done it, in a modest way. Don't think I'm proud about it. I was too near the bottom, a fortnight ago, to be that. Still, I've made the fortune, and this morning I was glad because——"

"What are you going to do now?" she said swiftly.

"Somehow," he slowly answered, "it doesn't seem to matter very much what I shall do. But I'd like to put a question. Suppose there was a man who made a million by gambling in shares——"

"Or one who made a pound at cards, or another who made half-a-crown on a dog-



race—they're all the same, you know; taking the money from other people without giving anything in return, and lowering themselves by doing so."

"Yes; but suppose you cared for the man who loved you, would you let the money stand between?"

"Not the money, Mr. Thornton, but the method of getting it."

"Well, to come to close quarters, would you let the method stand between you and him?"

"I couldn't help its standing there—and it—it would be like one of those mountains, as huge and as hard."

"Perhaps you mean that you could not bring yourself really to love such a man."

"I cannot say whether or not I could really love such a man," she said, and the utterance cost her the last of her courage; "but I am very certain that I could not honour him, and so . . ." She left the sentence unfinished.

A hot wave passed over Alan Thornton's face. After a little while he spoke quietly.

"I understand you now. You would break your heart before your principles, and there is nothing more to be said, except that I'm sorry to have persisted and troubled you. Let me take you back." He rose, gave her his hand, and helped her up.

"You don't need to come back with me," she said, downcast.

"I brought the car this morning, and must take it home."

They covered the short distance in silence. At the car he took her hand. His smile was not so badly done.

"Good-bye, Anna."

"Believe me"—her voice faltered—"I don't wish you anything but happiness. Good-bye."

She went to the house quickly, without looking back, and ran up the narrow stair to her room. . . . And so it ended.



"She tried to look prim, and succeeded in looking adorable."

COMING down to the evening meal, an hour later, she said to her hostess: "Auntie, I find it will be better for me if I go by the morning train."

It was near to bedtime when she remembered something.

"Uncle Charlie, did Mr. Thornton get his telegram this afternoon?"

"God bless me—no! It will be lying in the office. Well, well, he will just be getting it in the morning."

Anna had a craving to see the telegram, which she resisted. However, she was not far on her journey next day, when she obtained a paper.

The news shocked her. Yesterday had been a day of sheer panic on the Exchanges. As was soon to appear, the bubble, which had begun to grow more than a year ago, which had occasionally shrunk, only to swell to greater magnitude, had burst. And once more the few had won; the many had lost.

In her handbag she found a letter-card. She wrote on it, "I am sorry, Anna Culross," and posted it at the next stopping-place.

Anna's relations at Blarrour were not great correspondents. Five weeks had passed when she received a letter from her aunt, which mentioned, among other things, that on the evening before Anna left Blarrour, Mr. Thornton had driven over the bank at the bad bend, and had been very ill, but was now better and gone back to London.

On the next day came another letter—a single sheet, without address, bearing the words "Thank you,—Alan Thornton."

WHETHER we rejoice or mourn, the seasons pass. September was come again.

Anna had long ago decided not to go to Blarrour; she had, in fact, made plans with friends for a Continental excursion. But at the last hour she changed her mind, telegraphed to her aunt, and went North by the five o'clock in the morning train. For, all at once, it came upon her that she must seek the old solitudes, lie down on the heather and cry her heart out. All at once she was forced to acknowledge that for nearly a year she had been lying to herself.

Rain was falling heavily when she reached Blarrour, though the clouds showed signs of breaking.

"Haste you to the house, my lass," said her uncle. "I will fetch your things as soon as the train goes."

Her aunt declared she looked worn out after the thirteen hours' journey, and tried hard to induce her to go straight to bed. But Anna knew she was not looking so bad as that, and wondered at the old woman's urgency. At the evening meal it seemed to her that both her relations were not only nervous, but furtive, in manner.

"Auntie, have I come at the wrong time? Had you planned for some other visitor?" she asked at last.

They assured her that it was not so; that they had been overjoyed to get her telegram; and explained, rather lamely, that it had been a bothersome day on the railway.

After supper, Anna remembered a letter she ought to have written before leaving London, wrote it, and went over to the station to post it. The rain had ceased. The dusk was deepening.

The letter-box was directly under the window of the office. She peered into the dark room, and could just make out the counter where he had stood, the telegraph table at which she had sat, on the first morning of their acquaintance. Oh, if only things had been different!

She turned away, wondering now why she had come back to Blarrour, to live it all over again.

There was a light in the lamp-room at the other end of the platform. She would pull herself together, she thought, step along, and say "good evening" to Willie, the porter, whom she had known since her first visit.

She came to the open door. The porter was doing something to a lamp, which he had turned low.

"Good evening, Willie."

The porter turned—and he was not Willie.

"Alan!" The name was out before she knew.

"Anna!" he said softly; and after a moment's pause: "It was too bad not to warn you, but they had kept it dark so long that, I suppose, they were afraid."

"But what," she said, recovering control, though holding on to the door-post, "what are you doing here, Mr. Thornton?"

"Please! A railway porter never gets 'Mister.' . . . But you are asking what I'm doing here. Isn't it a little obvious? I'm doing work!"

"Work! But why?"

"I'd like to tell you, but you ought to have a seat. I wish they had warned you, even if it had kept you away. You're pale."

"I'm all right. Tell me why you are here."

"Well"—he turned up the wick, and she saw the longing in his eyes—"well, it came about quite simply. After I had that spill, I knew nothing for a week, and when I came back to my full senses, it was to learn that I was worth about fifty pounds. Do you still read the financial page?"

"No!"

"No more do I." His smile was not even ironic. "However, I had to do something for a living, and——"

"Surely your father——"

"Oh, yes, my father was pure gold. Wanted me to go back to my old place. But—I suppose it sounds absurd—but I discovered I had a bit of something like pride in my make-up. I had to do something for, and by, myself. So, after bothering my father to see his friend, one of the railway company's directors, I got the job here in December. I had explained that I required Highland air, that I had a friend in the stationmaster who would be firm yet patient with me, and so forth. I may say that Willie, the porter, got promotion, and was glad to go. And so, here I am!"

"Yes; but I can't understand your choos-

ing Blarrour, where you had that great misfortune."

His voice changed. "I chose Blarrour on the chance that you might come back to it again, if not this year, then some other year. And now that I see you standing there, the nine months have been well worth while. But don't be afraid that I'll remind you any more of our previous acquaintance. 'This once, and no more after,' as the poet——"

"Don't!" she whispered. "Don't make me cry!"

"Make you cry? God forbid! But why should you cry?"

"Oh, can't you see that—that I can't help feeling that I had something to do with your accident that evening? I know I had!"

"Nonsense!"

"And if you hadn't been hurt, you would have been in time to save something."

"Anna—if I may use your name once more—after what you said to me that day, I couldn't have really wanted to save anything. Honestly, I would not go back to my life of a year ago, not if the way were wide open. Honestly, I prefer to be a railway porter, and a—man."

"You are trying to be kind—to cheer me. Let me speak, Alan." Her breathing was quick. "When my father and mother were killed, they were poor. Nearly all the money that came to me was from free accident insurances given by certain newspapers. Somehow, I hated that money—£10,000 it was. I hated it, because it was like a—a price. But the interest has been useful to some of my friends. They don't need it now, and I never did, and never shall. Alan, there is the capital. Take the use of it and——"

"Anna, what are you saying?"

"Do what you will with it. Make another fortune——"

"On the Stock Exchange?"

"If—if it would make you happy. Only take it! I—I can't bear to see you like this!" She was making helpless little gestures with her hands.

"Anna, where are your principles—the principles that lifted me out of the mud?" he cried in sheer dismay. "Am I not a better man than I was?"

"Oh, a thousand times, Alan! But you can't possibly *feel* a better one—can you?"

"Anna, if you look at me like that, I'll forget myself. I swear to you that I feel a better man in every way—and it's you who made me——"

"No, no!"

"And sooner than touch your money, I'd walk out on the moor yonder, and not come back!"

"Oh, dear! Can't I do anything? And—and that lamp is smoking horribly."

He reached back and turned it out. There was a silence. And then he heard her sob.

"Anna," he said, "I'd give anything to touch your hand."

"Yes; you haven't even shaken it yet!"

"I couldn't. Mine is filthy with oil."

"But it works, and—and I rather like oil."

He came near to her in the darkness. He was shaking.

"Of one thing I'm certain," he said hoarsely, "you would be the last girl in the world to mock a man. Is it possible that you could care for a railway porter?"

Was it a whisper of the night breeze blowing, sweeter for the rain, over the miles of heather, that answered, "Why not?"

"Anna! . . . But is it possible that you could—marry a railway porter?"

In a whisper, at last—"There—there's nothing between us now, Alan."

Not a very direct answer, perhaps, but an admirably accurate statement of their position just then.

STRAY THOUGHTS.

Love is that glorious feeling that only the altar can alter.

Two bores make one wild.

Eve came after Adam and has been after him ever since.

Women's "pasts" usually begin with presents.

A bachelor is a man who looks before he leaps—and then stands still.

The Lord help those who help themselves.

A duck is a bird which goes under water for divers reasons and comes up again for sundry purposes.

Most men are more for getting than for giving.

G. B.

ANSWERING STARS

By EVELYN HERITAGE

Author of "The Dark Doorway"

ILLUSTRATED BY ELLIS SILAS

ANN MACLEAN, sole child of Adrian Maclean, known wherever a ship swims, lay on the edge of the cliff, and, through her binoculars, which she had brought to watch the sea traffic, more interesting to her than anything else in the world, she watched the man below her on the sands. She was curious to know what he was doing to the struggling sea-birds he had captured.

She loved and knew the sea, and she loved all who get their uncertain living from it. She loved the shrill and greedy gulls, the men who use the sea, and the ships, big and little, they sail on its tides. Her thoughts followed in the wake of her father's vessels from port to port, saw every rainbow in the spray about their bows, felt the shock of every grey sea that climbed inboard in the stinging winter gales, or drowsed with them as they swung lazily to their cables in the havens where it is always summer.

It was a crisp, clear day, with a fresh, sweet wind, and a sparkle of sun on the lilting tide. The cliffs were aglow and alive. The bees were in the clover: the larks spun up and down their spiral stairways of song: with gruff curses, the 'longshore rooks raided the sands: and the gulls took a watch ashore to rail shrilly at all things. It was a time in which to be glad to see, to feel, to be—a day that should breed kindness, and not a day on which to kneel on the sands under the windy blue heaven to do mysterious things to little, frightened birds.

She ran down the path to the shore. She had to find out what this man below her was about with his imprisoned birds. They were, she saw, northern divers, of all sea-birds most intimate with the sea, most dependent on it. The man, though she was familiar with Ringhaven, she did not know, but it was clear to her that he was a mariner.

He looked up when she stood over him, liked what he saw, though her blue eyes were hard, and her lips set; and then he dropped his own grey eyes, and went on with his business of cleaning a sticky, oily diver with petrol.

As she watched him, her face altered, and became serene and amused. When, the bird being clean again, he gave it a sprat, which it took greedily, she laughed, and Captain David Greenwell looked up at her cheerfully. Northern divers believe in taking what they can get while it is to be had, and the man who had cleaned it held the same faith.

"Off you go," he said to it, "and keep a sharper look-out in future, or you'll find this world too much for you."

He opened the basket by his side, and took out another diver, its plumage black and plastered with crude oil.

"This is jolly decent of you," Ann said. "Can I help?"

"You'd probably get in a frightful mess," he answered, looking at her frock.

"It's a washing frock. How have these dissipated little birds got like this?"

"Oil fuel, pumped out of the bilges of ships whose owners don't know enough to put in separators to save their oil. It floats about on the water in disgusting clots, and the birds come up into it after a dive. It clings to them. They can't get it off, and while it's on them they can't dive, so they starve to death."

"But you're getting it off with petrol?"

"Yes. Look at that first one, waiting for another sprat. These birds seem to have no fear of man. I remember being on the Southern Pier at Folkestone when some men were fishing from the lower staging. One of them caught a diver. The little fool took the bait as the tackle sank to the bottom, and had to be pulled up and unhooked. They put him in a corner to recover, and, five seconds later, he was making a tour of all the bait boxes, gob-

bling them bare. They had to throw him back into the sea, or they wouldn't have had a worm or a sprat left."

The second bird, clean again, was given his bribe, and Greenwell stood up.

"That's the last to-day," he said, "but there'll be others to-morrow, and all the time the wind keeps open, and sets the oil inshore here. The tide rolls them up on the beach when they've got too weak to swim, so I retrieve them, give them a feed and a rest overnight, and clean them off in the morning."

"You're a seafarer yourself, aren't you?" Ann asked.

"I used to be."

"'Used to be,' at your age? How could you give up the sea? I couldn't."

"I didn't. It gave me up. Finally."

His voice was so hard and bitter that she let that drop.

"I'd like to help you with this rescue work," she said. "It has the attraction that all the victims are worth assisting. And there's something particularly rotten in the idea of the sea itself going back on its own birds."

"It isn't the sea: it's the men who use it, and especially the owners. At the moment, I can't get as much petrol as I'd like. It evaporates so quickly."

"You shall have all the petrol you want. I'm the daughter of a ship-owner, so, perhaps, it's a bit up to me, don't you think?"

"More than a bit, if your father's vessels burn oil. I shall be glad of your help. Can you be here to-morrow morning, at six o'clock? The tide'll be setting in then."

"Yes. I'll be here, with a couple of two-gallon cans."

"Positive riches! Wouldn't it be better to send them to my cottage? Anybody will know where to bring them, if you say they're for Captain Greenwell."

"I'm Ann Maclean. Good-bye, till to-morrow."

A master mariner, then, without a vessel, and some reason why he thought that he would never get another. She walked back to her rooms, and put a trunk call through to her father.

"Who's Captain Greenwell?" she asked.

"Hold the line, and I'll have him turned up. . . . I've got his particulars. He lost the *Sarn Helen*, coming up Channel in a fog. He said that he struck some floating wreckage, and had to beach her at once because she was so badly holed. But—no wreckage was ever found."

"That wasn't his fault."

"No, maybe not."

"But, all the same, he won't get another ship."

"It'd surprise me if he did, Ann. Why?"

"Oh, I've met him down here." She rang off, knowing her father.

"Give a man the benefit of the doubt?" he had said, often. "There shouldn't be any doubt, of any kind, about a ship's captain, or his luck."

Late that evening, her father rang her up.

"The *Phyllis* reports she'll be off Ringhaven about 3 a.m.," he said. "She'll stand close in to pick you up."

"Thanks awfully, father; but I don't think I'll go in her, after all. It's only round to the Pool of London, so it's hardly worth while."

"Oh, all right; I'll wireless her. Are you coming home?"

"Not quite yet, I think."

Her father rang off, knowing his daughter.

When she went down to the shore to meet Greenwell in the morning, a strong pulse of cruelty beat in the sea, and the tide that licked at the sands rasped like the tongue of a starved cat. Already, though it would not be high water for two hours, a cross-wind was driving heavy spray over the lighthouse at the end of the harbour mole, and the fishing smacks were running for shelter. Where she stood with him, there was a little lee, but even so there was an ugly swirl in the waters. He looked out across them, with his eyes puckered, a vital, energetic man, with his life thrown out of rhythm. She stood close to him, and he felt that she was friendly, unready to condemn.

"There's some kind of rot coming over me," he said. "I've just caught myself feeling sorry because there are no birds in trouble to-day to make something for me to do."

"You must find something to do. Are you really fond of the sea?"

"Fond? I don't know. It was satisfying to beat her at her worst, and use her at her best. Yes, I suppose I'm fond of her."

"Could you give her up?"

"She's given me up."

"Don't let's talk about that. I know the story, and I think you had rotten luck. What do you mean to do next?"



" That's more than I know yet. I've had a sort of idea that I might be of use in the fishing fleet."

She went up above high-water mark, and sat down on the sand, with her back to a boulder. She smiled up at him, and he came and stretched himself beside her. She could see that he was puzzled about himself, and at a loss, but that he showed no signs of defeat.

" You'll do better than wasting yourself catching herrings," she said.

" I don't know. I've got an old dingey, and I've been long-lining for codling. It's kept me going. You'll probably think it's

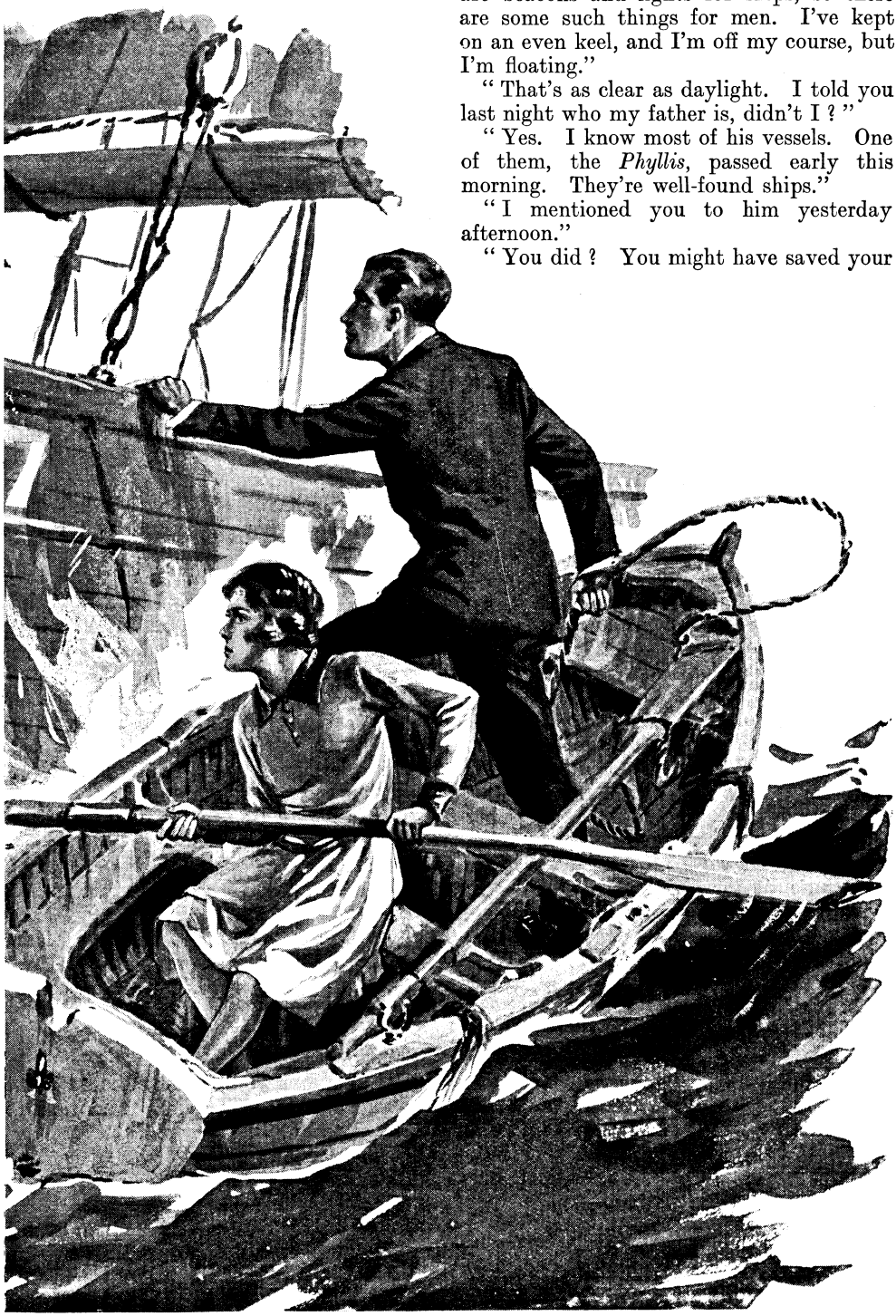
rubbish, but I've an idea that just as there are beacons and lights for ships, so there are some such things for men. I've kept on an even keel, and I'm off my course, but I'm floating."

"That's as clear as daylight. I told you last night who my father is, didn't I?"

"Yes. I know most of his vessels. One of them, the *Phyllis*, passed early this morning. They're well-found ships."

"I mentioned you to him yesterday afternoon."

"You did? You might have saved your



"They got to him, and, somehow, they got aboard."

time, Miss Maclean. I know of him. I lost my ship, and that's all from me to-day, thank you. Though, of course, I applied to him. He's a bad man to beat—just, but not merciful. And he gets things done, which is everything, really." He looked at her attentively. "There's a fine hardihood about you, too. I think it'd be God help your husband if he were weak."

"He'd never be my husband if he were weak."

From the time that Ann Maclean had done with school and college, she had gone to sea in her father's ships, beginning with small voyages, under elderly, safe captains, and ending in a long, ranging cruise in the South Pacific. She had been of use as his representative, and, she believed, she had learnt something of men and things. Therefore, as the days went by, and her judgment operated, she ended by being ready to stand by her opinion of David Greenwell.

What confirmed her in it was a fine piece of seamanship of his in rowing out to a disabled smack, though her own share in what he did she failed to weigh. The smack belonged to the local fishing fleet, and had no engine, for her owner was an old man, who trusted to sail.

Greenwell and Ann were on the shore together when they saw the smack limping in at the tail of the fleet in half a gale of wind, with one man flat on the deck, and Dan'l, the owner, at the helm, doing nothing.

"He'll founder if he tries to bring her in alone without shortening sail," Greenwell said. "His mast'll be blown out of him the minute he puts his helm over." He started to run for his dingey, with Ann after him. "There's something very wrong," he judged. "I'm going off to him."

Ann helped him to launch his boat, and climbed in herself over the stern.

"You can't put me ashore without overturning the boat," she triumphed, "and you'll find I can pull my weight."

"You've got to, now. And, since you're here, I can do with you. Pull away." It was an order, and she liked him for it. Since she had chosen to come, she must now obey.

Old Dan'l, with a broken arm, and a stunned and bleeding man laid out on the deck, was driving down on the harbour mouth, and hoping without conviction for a miracle when he put his helm over. He had lost one man overboard, and his faith in miracles was at its weakest.

They got to him, and, somehow, they got aboard, and shortened sail for him.

"As fine a bit of work as ever I see," Old Dan'l said. "My mate's knocked out, I've lost my nevvy overboard, and my own left arm's broken. If you'd like to come in place of my nevvy, you've only to say."

"I'll think about it, thanks," Greenwell said.

"Well, you was askin' if anyone wanted a hand. I want you."

Just before the smack came safely alongside the jetty, Greenwell and Ann slipped into his dingey, and rowed away, leaving the fishing vessel to be made fast by the men who dropped on to her deck as soon as she touched.

"I might do worse than take his offer," Greenwell said.

"You'll do better than that. You thought we were going to be drowned, didn't you?"

"I should have been, if you hadn't come too. I'd never have done it alone. You've been splendid."

"And what have you been?"

"I? Oh, I'm a seaman. I'd have lost my self-reliance, you see, if I'd let a little rough water scare me. I daren't let the sea get on top of me till I'm dead."

She held out her hand to him, bleeding in half a dozen places, and lost it in his.

"I don't think we'll ever forget this morning, either of us, as long as we live," she said.

"That means we shall never forget each other," he answered slowly.

"Well, do you particularly want to?" she asked. "I don't. Why should you?"

"You know why."

"No, I don't, David. When you wish for anything in this world, there's only one thing to do. Have you ever been to the Zoo?"

"Yes. Why?"

"When they had a bear-pit?"

"Yes."

"Then didn't you admire the persistent way the bears tried to climb that pole to get at the buns they craved?"

"Do you mean that?"

"I mean I know a man when I see one."

ADRIAN MACLEAN looked up at his daughter in despair, and foresaw no peace upon this earth until she had her way. There were times when he wished that instead of having the beauty of her mother, and his own pertinacity, she had been dowered reversely.

"You are asking me to give my new *Amadis* to a captain who lost his last ship," he recapitulated. "You are asking me to do that simply because he seems to you a wronged and a misjudged man who cleans seagulls when they've got themselves dirty, and who can, in addition, handle a dingey. There is a difference between the *Amadis* and a rowing boat."

"Father, do I pester you for favours?"

"Not generally; but you've begun by asking for the impossible."

"But it isn't impossible if you could do it, and you can. Isn't a man ever to have another chance?"

"Not in my ships. A captain has no right to have bad luck."

"Is it bad luck to love me?" she asked.

"So that's it? So that time's come?" He had been waiting for it for three years.

"And why shouldn't it have come?"

"There's no reason why it shouldn't." He got up, and walked about his office. "By Heaven, Ann, I'd rather see you married to the bucko mate of a New England windjammer, with a fist like a ham, than to any of the fishy things in this stale tank of a city. All right. I'll see him, if that's it. You've known him three weeks, and you're prepared to answer for him?"

"I am."

"Well, I've said I'll see him, flawed or no."

"He hasn't a flaw: he fell, and he's not broken."

"We'll know better about that when I've done with him, Ann. So far, I know he's lost a ship, and I know he's used your sympathy to get him a fresh start. I want to know more than that about him, my dear: I want to know that he isn't a self-seeking egotist, who's using you for what you can do for him."

Adrian Maclean saw David Greenwell, and spoke to him very plainly.

"If it hadn't been for Ann," he said, "you'd never have got face to face with me. But she's over-persuaded me, and I've given way. I don't know how that touches your conscience, and I'm not going to ask you.

"But I'm giving you my *Amadis*, to take to Santa Cruz. She'll be laden with a cargo that must get there by the fifteenth of next month, and it'll take you all your seamanship to do it, the ship being what she is. Now—and listen to this—if for any reason you can name, or of which you can think, you fail to be there by that date, you can go ashore and leave her to the new captain I shall send. I shan't care what excuses you make if you're late. Be late, and you'll go, without appeal. You know the ship, you know what she can do. Do you accept?"

"It can be done, and I'll try."

"Very well. I'll come aboard before you sail. Good day to you."

Adrian Maclean took Ann down with him to see the *Amadis* cast off, and he gave her opportunity of speaking to David before the new vessel left the dockside.

"Can it be done, David?" she asked.

"Just. It leaves no margin at all, but it's possible."

"It means a lot," she said. "You won't miss any chances, will you?"

"No. And I'll never forget how I got this one, even if I have to go ashore at Santa Cruz."

"You won't have to. You'll get her through somehow. Even if you don't, I shall know that it wasn't humanly possible. But it'll mean waiting, and I hate waiting for what I want. If you get her through, father won't make us wait. You see, he expects me to give him a son he can rely on when he's tired of relying on himself. All he wants to be sure of is that you're that man, someone whom he can trust without a second thought. Try to prove it at once. That's why this voyage counts so much. If you can't pull it off, you can't. I shan't misunderstand."

ADRIAN MACLEAN was in the wireless cabin, talking to the operator.

"Everything satisfactory?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Pleased with the ship?"

"Quite, sir, thank you."

"Comfortable quarters?"

"Very, sir."

"Good. You won't wish to leave her, then. Now, young man, there's something I want you to do for me in strictest confidence. At midday, on the thirteenth of next month, I want you to deliver to Captain Greenwell this S.O.S. message." He handed to him a slip of paper, and a ten-pound note. "You will back it up with any other messages your experience suggests as being necessary. The message will take the ship half a day's steaming off her course, and that is the sole object of it."

"But——"

Adrian Maclean, looking very grim, cut

him short. "I am the owner of this vessel," he said, "and I have a good reason for what I am ordering you to do. If you fail to do it, I promise you that I will break you. Remember, all that will result from it is that my ship will be twenty-four hours longer at sea than she would be were Captain Greenwell not to get that message. If you refuse, you will go ashore now, and I'll see that another operator replaces you."

There seemed to be no harm in it. The ship belonged to Adrian Maclean. If he wished that it should be delayed in that way, the waste of time would be at his expense.

"Very good, sir," the operator capitulated.

"There'll be another ten pounds for you on proof that you obeyed my orders intelligently. A pleasant voyage to you."

Ten minutes later, the *Amadis* was out in the stream, on her way to Santa Cruz.

Ann turned away from watching her, and spoke to her father.

"My dear, when you come to think of it, is it such a wonderful test? You're only encouraging him to take risks that, perhaps, he shouldn't take, to be in in time. That's not good seamanship, after all."

"You're quite right, Ann. If that were all that I meant, I should be a very foolish old man."

"Then what do you mean?"

"Do you promise not to wireless to him, or communicate with him in any way before the end of his voyage, if I tell you what my test is really? For, if he knew, the test wouldn't be a test."

She hesitated, but she promised.

"Very well then. This is the test. On the thirteenth he will receive an S.O.S., imploring him to go half a day's steaming off his course, so that, if he obeys that imperative call, he will be quite unable to reach Santa Cruz by the fifteenth. I'm trying him high, but it's for your sake."

"But you've just said that you've made it impossible for him to fulfil your condition."

"I've made it impossible for him to be in port to time if he acts on that S.O.S."

"He will act on it."

"I hope so, for your sake, Ann."

"Because it'll lose him his ship?"

"No, my dear, because if, under any temptation, he fails to go to the help of a ship that reports herself sinking to him, then I shall have no mercy on him in this life, and I hope that Almighty God will have none on him in the next. If he brings the *Amadis* to Santa Cruz on the fifteenth for his own selfish ends, for fear of losing you, then I will see that the whole story is published. Then, he'll be down and out. And then you won't grieve."

"It's clever," she said, "but it isn't fair. I won't have anything to do with such a test. Now, whatever happens, I'll marry him as soon as he'll have me."

"If he's in by the fifteenth?"

"Even if he does that."

"Not when you've thought it over."

THOSE who only know the high roads of the sea are as much at a loss in an emergency as the people who are acquainted with none but the main thoroughfares of a city. The ordinary traveller, availing himself of the advertised routes, could never have got on board the Clyde-built, but now Dago-owned S.S. *Santa Maria* at Bahia in time to be in Santa Cruz to meet Greenwell in the *Amadis*.

Once, the *Santa Maria* had been a well-found vessel, with a habit of keeping her word in return for adequate repairs and care. Failing these, she had lost her self-respect. In her fallen state, she gave every British seaman who saw her the same feeling as irritates even the most callous man of the world who sees the aged ruin of a degraded gentlewoman.

But she was still a steamship, and, in spite of the weather, the betting was only five to three against her reaching port within three days of her scheduled time. She would certainly do it if the wind and sea abated, and—this was important—her main steam feed did not leak badly in more than two places at once. So far, she had never failed to reach her destination eventually.

With the optimism of one who refers all troublesome matters to his patron saint, and then ceases to interfere with his high plans, Captain Diego Surraco took the *Santa Maria*, and Ann, out to sea in a rising gale. Her cargo was worth many thousands of pounds, but that and the ship were insured. Up to now, Captain Surraco had never been drowned, nor did he ever anticipate such a fate.

Her decks were gritty with stokers from the cheap coal, her engine-room was foggy with steam, vile with the smell of oil and bilge-water, and all her alleyways reeked of garlic and stale dirt. Her frames groaned, her deck seams gaped, but, relying on her

stout old British hull, she floundered on into the teeth of a stiff south-easter with a kick in it.

Ann kept to her state-room as much as possible, and fed herself very largely upon the provisions she had brought aboard; but it was soon evident to her that unless the gale died away, or something drastic were done, the vessel, in spite of all promises, verbal and printed, would reach Santa Cruz only after David had sailed again, provided he were in port by the fifteenth. She did not imagine that he would be, but she was determined not even to seem to share in her father's plot. Accordingly, she appeared in the saloon for dinner, and bore the captain's compliments with patience.

"This is a pleasure for which I had ceased to long," he said.

She allowed that to float past her, and let him see the respectable supply of real money that she carried in her hand-bag.

"I take it," she said, "that you have as many uses for honestly earned money as any other *caballero*?"

"More," Surraco said, with conviction.

Shortly after that, unprecedented orders were given by him to his incredulous engine-room staff.

"*De veras*," the Bahia commercial traveller said, listening to the uproar from the machinery, "it is as if my asthmatical great-aunt believed herself at her first ball again. But she will injure herself internally."

Greenwell, in the *Amadis*, had also met the same strong winds and heavy seas. Both, in his case, were on his beam, and his ship settled down to discover how far she could roll, and still right herself. Worst of all, she yawed unhandily, wallowed, and, in that cross-sea, steered like a market-basket in an Iceland geyser. It grew very plain to him that he had little chance, unless a flat calm fell, of reaching Santa Cruz by the fifteenth, and he began to believe that Adrian Maclean had deliberately given him something to do that was impossible. Greenwell, beside himself, swore to beat him, though he saw no way of doing it. Not another pound of steam could be raised, and the chief-engineer was already getting the impossible out of his staff and his machinery.

"How will it help you, or any of us, if we lift the engines off their bedplate?" he asked Greenwell. "I tell ye, I'm getting the last ounce out of her, sir."

The shrill wind held, and the *Amadis*, yawing and wallowing, was driving Greenwell into an ague of rage against herself, her owner, and the bitter chance that had thrown foul weather into her course. He needed sleep, for he hardly left the bridge, he was lined and haggard, and he drove everyone unavailingly. The ship was doing all that she could, all that his skill and knowledge of the sea was able to devise, and she was not doing well enough.

He was still fighting her as doggedly as she seemed to be hitting back at him, when the wireless operator, on the evening of the twelfth, brought him an S.O.S.

Her bribed outburst of indecorous energy had injured the *Santa Maria* internally beyond any cure in the knowledge of her captain. Broken down on the face of the turbulent waters, she lay at the mercy of every mischance, and slobbered on the crazed sea, a panic-stricken example and warning. Her engine-room was a junk box, she had rolled till her masts had gone, and the combers were already following each other aboard to snatch whatever they could, including, so far, the chart-house, some of the bridge, and all the boats. Before the accumulators of her emergency wireless apparatus ran down, she was telling everybody that she was on the point of drowning, with all souls. No answer could be got from her, because her receiving gear was damaged, but she could send.

Greenwell read the message, and put the alternatives to himself. If he went to her, no hope at all would be left of slamming the *Amadis* into Santa Cruz to time somehow.

"Have you spoken her?" he asked.

"She doesn't reply, sir."

"What other ships are going to her?"

"We're the nearest to her, sir, by a couple of hundred miles."

"All right. Go and see if anyone else, as near as we are to her, is answering."

He damned the *Santa Maria*, after the lad had gone, for still haunting the sea at all. She should have been broken up ten years ago.

"What's that, sir, an S.O.S.?" the mate asked, coming up to him.

"Mind your own business," Greenwell snapped.

The mate stared at him, and edged away, but he did not go far.

"We're the nearest ship, by a couple of hundred miles, sir," the wireless operator reported again. "Shall I try to tell her we're coming?"

"Get back to your duty."

Back in his quarters, the wireless operator, with deep thankfulness, put a match to the false S.O.S. that, had it not been for this real one, he had orders to give to Greenwell to-morrow. Even now, he was not quite sure that he would ever have delivered that faked message. He put on his ear-'phones again, and listened to the weak but never-ending appeals of the *Santa Maria.*

"Surely we'll go to her," he thought. "Surely. But that Dago isn't listening to anything but his own hysterics."

And, by and by, the energy faded out of the sagging, jury-rigged aerial of the disabled ship.



"'What's that, sir, an S.O.S.?' the mate asked, coming up to him."

In the *Santa Maria*, Ann was trying to restore their hopes.

"There's a British ship, the *Amadis*, within a hundred miles," she said. "She'll be alongside us by morning."

"How do you know?"

"I ought to know. She's my father's. And Captain Greenwell will come as fast as he can steam."

"She has not answered our distress signals. No one has answered our signals."

"Then there's something wrong with your receiver. Of course the *Amadis* is coming."

She went back to her cabin, and shut herself in. There, she faced doubt. Would the *Amadis* come? David believed that unless he reached Santa Cruz by the fifteenth, he would lose his ship, and her. But that would not count with him when there were lives in danger. Of course it would not. She laughed softly. The thing was not without its amusing irony. If indeed he did press on to port thinking to win her like that, then he would lose her for ever. It had been easy, at home, with her father, to laugh at the suggestion that he would pass by while another ship went down. But, on the other hand, he was captain of a vessel again after he had been so certain that he would never be entrusted with another and he had been told that no excuse he could make, no reason he could give, would save him if he failed to reach Santa Cruz by that date. Would he put her above all else, and go on? If he did, what terrible knowledge would come to him when he read the list of the drowned in the *Santa Maria*!

At four in the morning she opened her door, went out into the reeling alleyway, and got to the saloon. It was dimly lit by stinking oil lamps, and it was filled with people occupied according to their natures. Some were praying, many were drinking, others cursing, and, in one corner, three women were screaming like rabbits with every plunging roll of the ship. The air was almost unbreathable. It was stale. It smelt of spirit. It was acrid with the taint of human fright.

"So far, no one has answered us," she was told. "Where is your father's ship, that was coming to save us?"

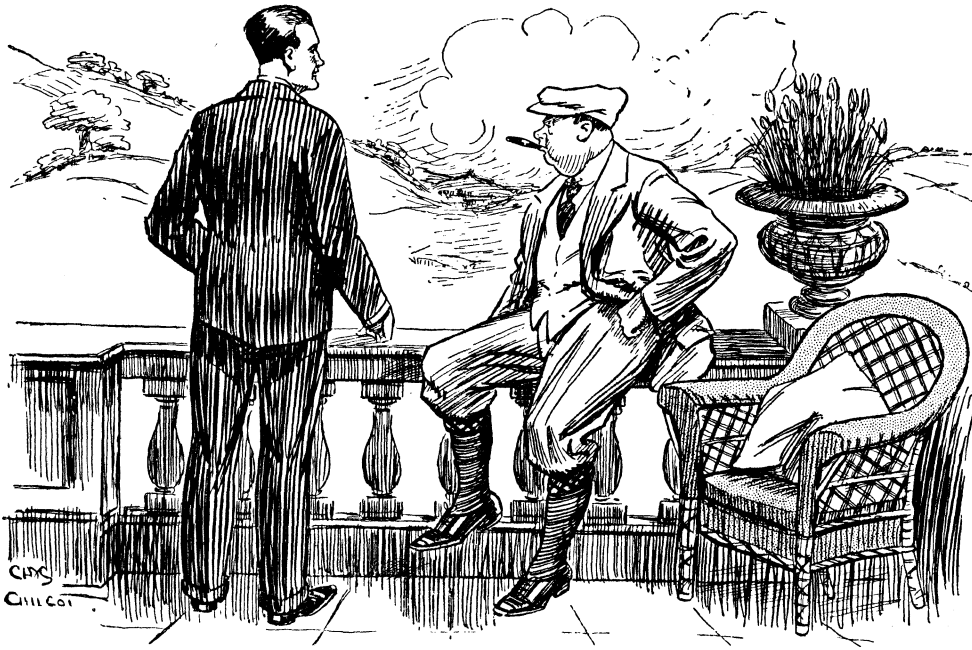
In spite of herself, Ann began to think of dying decently when the time came. The vessel was rolling cruelly, but a little more slowly than she had been. That might mean that the gale was not so strong, or that the water was gaining in the hull. Ann went again into the alleyway abaft the saloon leading to her cabin, changed her mind as to staying there when she saw that her electric travelling lamp was flickering out, and made her way to the door leading to the main deck. That was locked, and she stumbled forward again, crossed the saloon, and went up the companion-ladder leading to the boat deck, but she could not get there because the door was fast.

She could, however, look out through the glass lights. She saw that the wind had blown the sky clear, and she could see the stars to the horizon when the ship rolled, stars that seemed to have gone mad above a mad sea. She hung there, on tiptoe, staring out. Had the *Amadis* been coming, she should have been alongside by now. Ann could see forward, could watch the rollers sweep across the deck of the vessel with every surge. She could see, too, that the *Santa Maria* was still floating high.

She watched the stars again, and wondered what she would know about them soon, or if they would go out for ever.

And there were two stars, low down on the skyline to starboard. There was a yellowish one, in front of and above a clear green one. They were behaving oddly, keeping time with one another. They rolled about the heavens with no relation at all to any other star or constellation. They were drunken, and they swayed, and they came on, and they came on. She hung there, staring, while the east grew grey.

The sun and the *Amadis* came together.



WEEK-END GOSSIP.

"Lovely vista!"
"Yes, and the view ain't bad, either."

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

MY HAT

By B. E. Todd

IT is said that women like hat-buying: certainly some faces are more adapted to a sudden change of headgear than are others. There are women who by virtue of their beauty can wear a handful of twisted straw and remain uninsulted by the mirror, but I am not one of them.

When I slunk into Deloraine's on Monday morning I was terrified by the supercilious look of the saleswoman.

"I want a hat," I said.

"Yes, Moddam."

"I want a black hat of the same sort of shape as the one I'm wearing."

She raised her eyebrows and smiled pityingly.

"We only stock the very latest models."

But because I was not yet cowed, I answered, "I bought this hat from you a fortnight ago."

"A fortnight ago," she repeated in the manner of one trying to recollect the Dark Ages. "I am afraid we have nothing like that now. But I can show you our newest creations."

Thereafter she showed me. She also pulled hat after hat well down upon my disgusted face and showed neither amusement nor concern at the results.

"This is extremely smart," she murmured, as I tried to hide my horror of something that looked like an inverted pudding basin bordered with barnacles.

"I should like something *pretty*," I pleaded.

She took no notice, but wrenched a grey, dome-shaped thing on to my head.

"A model," she announced.

"Of what?" I asked.

Then she changed the subject by crowning me with a bright-green, boat-shaped thing. The bows (I write nautically) were spattered with small gold horseshoes.

"A most amusing little hat," she declared. And so it was.

"I don't really think——" I began. But the words, which must be a well-known danger-signal to milliners, spurred her to a frenzy. The chairs became littered with rejected hats; my head ached; my ears felt quite loose; never, I trust, had my face looked so naked.

"Now this," she remarked, screwing a rather

untidy nest-shaped object on to my head. "This is"—she tugged hard—"this is the very last——"

"Straw!" thought I.

"Creation from Paris," she concluded.

I know of nothing more frightening than the calm glance of a milliner. Hats should be sold by the blind: one should look alone into the mocking mirror.

"It is really becoming."

I turned my back on the glass, for I could bear no more, and another customer was looking at me with compassion. If that nest were becoming, then what would be the result of that other horror—a black one, apparently wreathed with sardines—that she twirled upon her insinuating finger-tips?

"So softening," she crooned. I did not wish to be softened.

"I'm afraid I mustn't wait any longer. I have an appointment—an urgent appointment," I gasped. "I must go at once."

"We should be delighted to *build* you a hat to your own individual requirements, Moddam."

And then I heard another triumphant voice exclaiming, "Yes, I like this one very much. I will wear it now if you will send my other one to the club."

I turned and saw another customer, arranging my hat on her head. I could have sworn upon oath that it was mine. Yet even as I turned to claim it she took it from her head, and I, seeing Deloraine's familiar blue and gold label dangling from the lining, moved sadly away.

My torturer was awaiting me with another hat.

I ducked angrily as she approached me, but she evidently mistook my movement for acquiescence. An instant later my face was covered. What the novelists describe as "a merciful blackness" descended upon me.

"A little large perhaps," said a distant voice. "But still very *chic*, don't you think, Moddam?"

I was unable to tell her what I thought, but when my extinguisher was removed I looked in vain for my own comfortable, kindly hat.

I could not find it, nor could the assistant, nor could the manageress, who helped in the search, and who doubted my sanity.

"Perhaps Moddam was not wearing a hat this morning?" she suggested.

"I always wear hats," I replied haughtily, and looked about for witnesses, but the other customer had gone, and though my assistant agreed that I had worn a hat that morning, she looked at me suspiciously.

Finally, after leaving my address, I bought a depressed-looking brown thing—a turban, I think they called it—and crept self-consciously away.

My sister-in-law met me in the hall.

"And now I know," said she cruelly, "now I know what the fashion correspondents mean when they write, 'Very amusing is this little hat.'"

I told my tale and waited for sympathy.

"But don't you remember?" said Penelope. "Don't you remember that the children were playing at shop yesterday, and that you lent them your hats?"

"Well?"

"Helen wanted some labels to make them look more 'shoppy' and I gave her some old price tickets. I remember now that one of them came off the hat I bought at Deloraine's the other day. I remember it because it was a blue and gold one!"



THE LIMIT.

IRATE BUS-DRIVER (to baby car owner): Garn, git out of it, you—vitamin!



THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

M.C. (at village dance): Look 'ere, my lad, this is an 'op, an' if you come 'ere you're expected to 'op, and if you won't want to 'op you 'ad better 'op it quick!

ALSO MINUS SOCKS.

STOREKEEPER (to new clerk): You began life as a barefoot boy, I understand?

HIRAM TOD: Yes, sir; I was born without shoes.

IT ROSE TO MEET HIM.

"DID you hurt yourself much when the branch broke?"

"No, not until I reached the ground."

POSTPONED INDEFINITELY.

POET LOVEJOY (to Editor): My poetry will be read when all my contemporaries are forgotten.

EDITOR: Well, come around and see me then.

FIRST PERIOD.

LITTLE ELLA: Oh, papa! Do you know the car had a tyre punctuated to-day?

PAPA: You mean punctured, my dear.

LITTLE ELLA: Well, anyhow, we came to a full stop.

LIKE IN ALL OTHER RESPECTS.

MR. HARDFAX: That blushing rose you wear exactly matches your adorable complexion.

MISS PEACHBOW: But the rose is artificial.

MR. HARDFAX: Yes, I noticed that.

THE VANISHED PAST.

KATHRYN: These pearls were given to me on my last birthday.

KITTYE: Very pretty. How many years have you had them?

WHAT HE HAD.

STUDENT (to Surgeon): What did you operate on the man for?

SURGEON: Fifty pounds.

STUDENT: Yes, but I mean what did the man have?

SURGEON: Fifty pounds.

SHE GRABBED HIM RIGHT THERE.

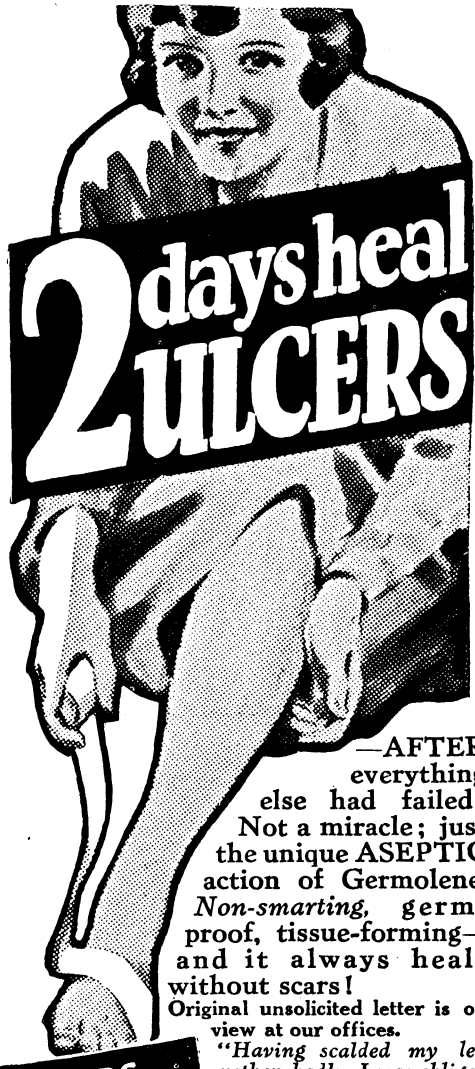
PERCY: How would you—aw—like to own —aw—a little puppy, Miss Dovely?

MISS D.: This is so sudden, Mr. Chappingham.

HUMOUR OF YE OLDEN DAYS.

Two knaves walked past a gallows; said the one: Now, Pedro, where would ye be if yon gallows had its due?

SECOND KNAVE: Walking alone, Adolphus, walking alone.



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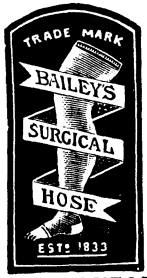
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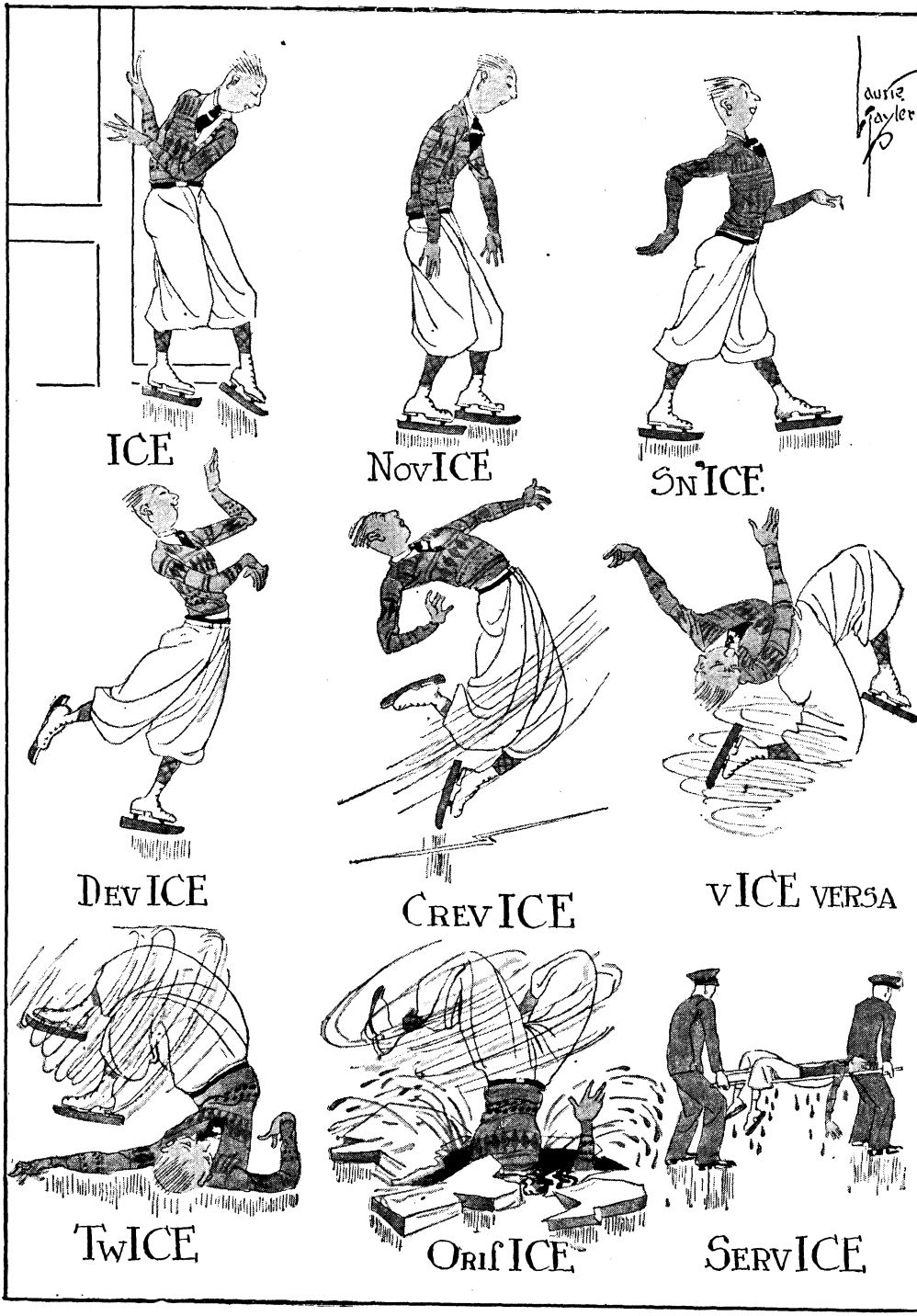
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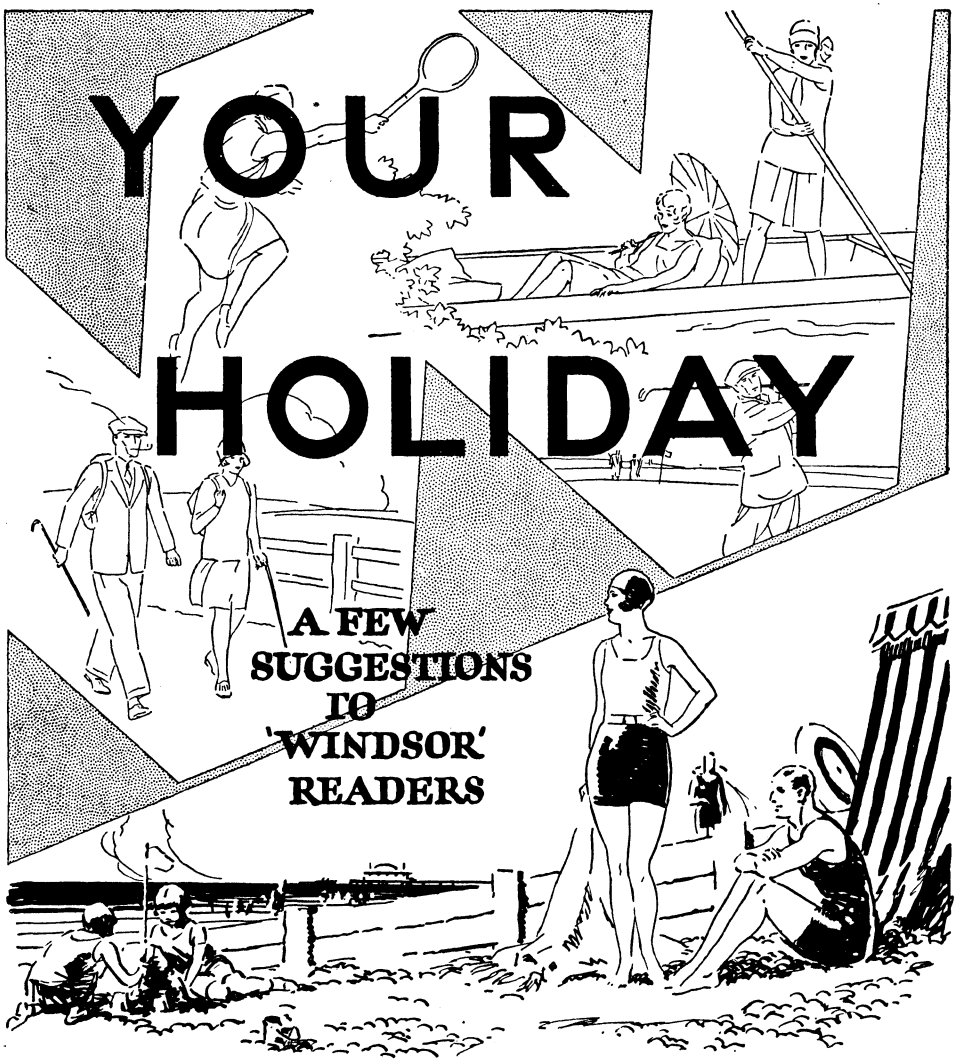
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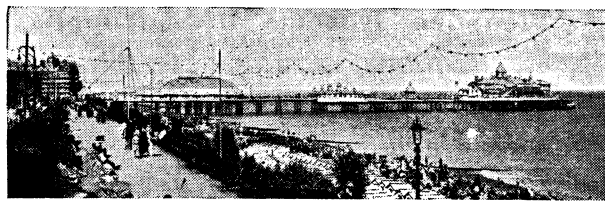
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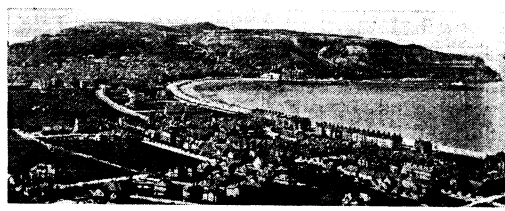
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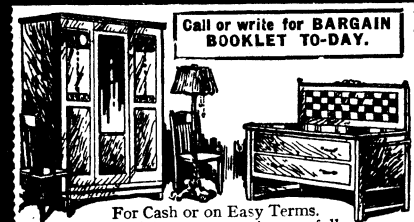
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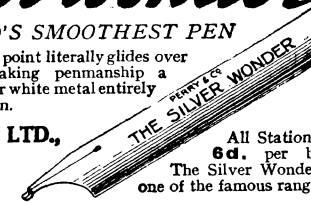
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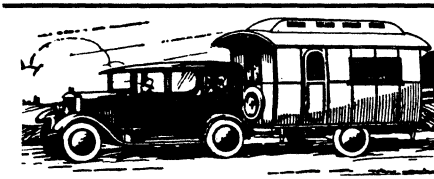
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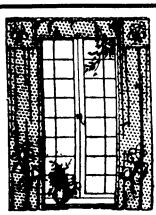
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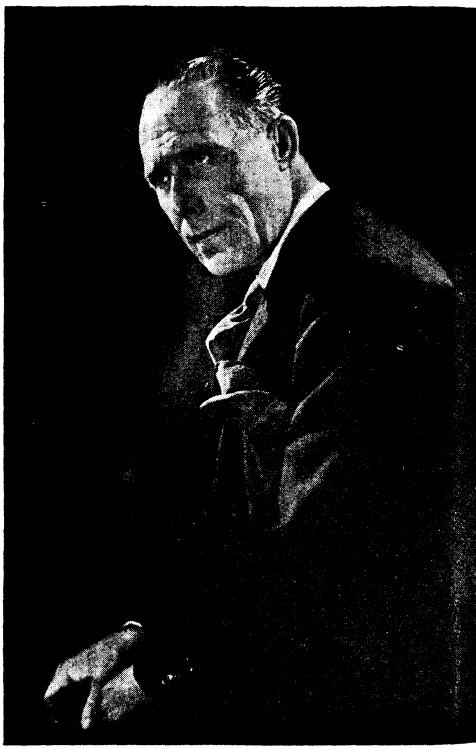


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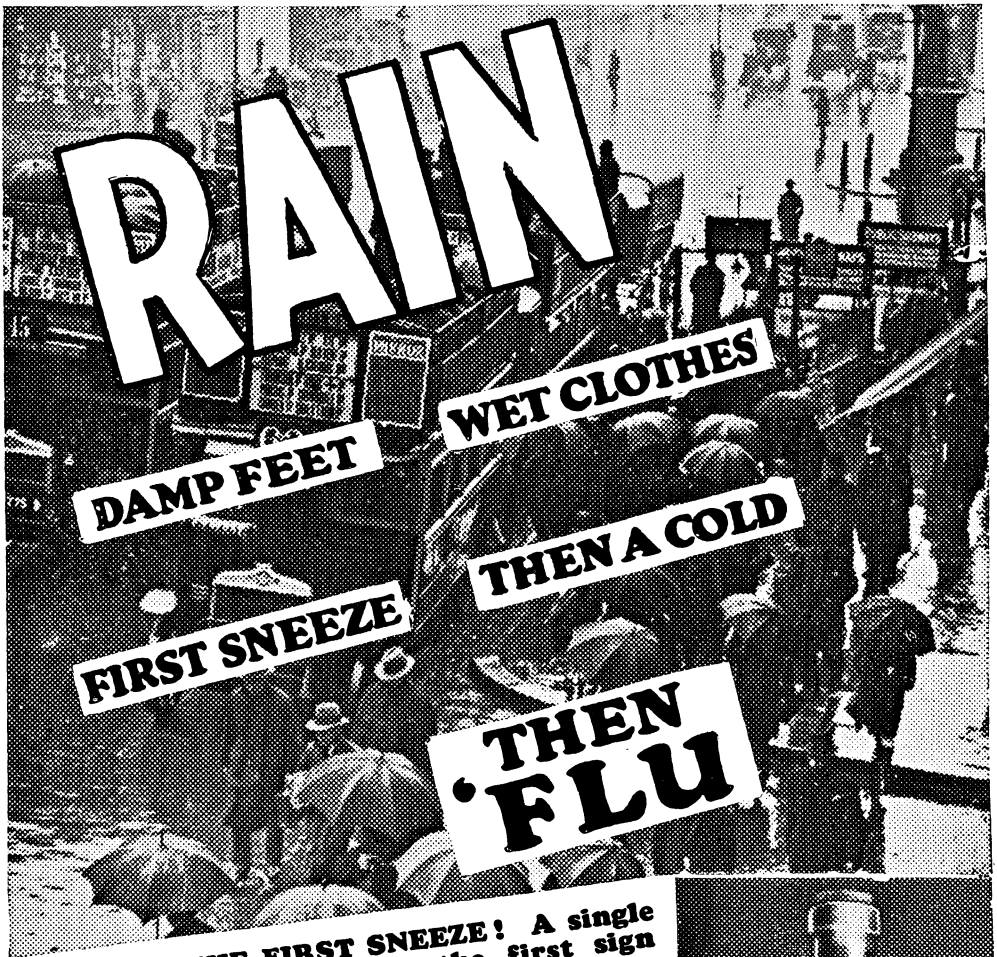
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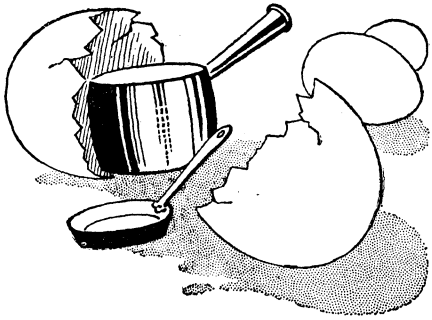


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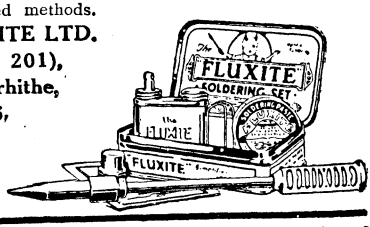
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